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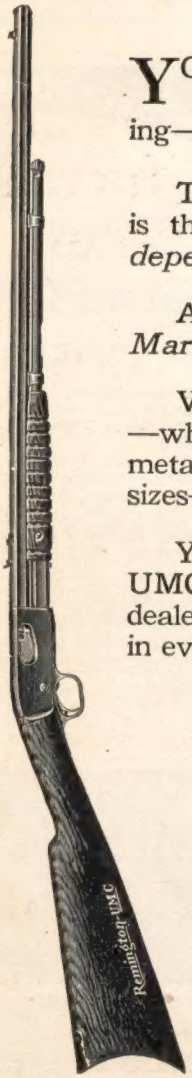

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MONTH-END EDITION

VOLUME XXXIII NUMBER 3

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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POPULAR MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXIII. AUGUST 15, 1914. No. 3.

The Threatening Eye

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "North of Fifty-Three," "A Ton of Gold," Etc.

The queer story of a peaceable Westerner who, through no wish of his own, becomes the center of a mystery. The entanglement calls forth his uttermost resources, yet brings him very close to happiness. Reading his story you can appreciate the aphorism in "King John": "When Fortune means to men most good, she looks upon them with a threatening eye."

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CHAPTER I.

IN A SPIRIT OF CHIVALRY.

BETWEEN a normal, average sort of a man, riding the Montana ranges for a living, and divers others of like quality puttering about in Alaska, two thousand miles, there may seem no particular connection. The more so that neither was conscious of the other's existence, nor would have cared a hang if they had been. It may seem a trifle odd that the activities of the latter should suddenly project a vivid note of color across the more or less colorless existence of the first mentioned. Nevertheless, so complex a thing is life, and so curious its manifestations, that such a thing actually befell.

Up on the dour reaches of the Yukon, a few hardy souls had gone seeking, and had eventually found, gold in prodigious quantities. That matter is now ancient history. So, too, is the stupendous rush of gold seekers that followed hard on the discovery. And since the goods of these stampeding thousands had to go in over bleak, heartbreaking trails, there arose a demand for pack animals—horses, mules, dogs, anything that could carry a burden of grub and blankets. And before so very long this Macedonian cry penetrated to the Larb Hills, where the T Down ranged a thousand head of horses, and Luke Freeman was boss wrangler of the same.

The T Down presently secured an opportunity of exchanging sundry numbers of—to them—valueless stock for perfectly good dollars. The grasping of this opportunity shortly sent seven carloads of T Down geldings rolling west to Seattle, with Skagway and the Alaska interior as their ultimate

destination. Luke Freeman being, of all the T Down men, least likely to celebrate in untimely season, went west in charge of the shipment.

Thus the circle is complete. If certain individuals had never burrowed through moss and frozen muck to the rich bed rock along those northern streams, Luke's existence would, in all likelihood, have gone on indefinitely along a certain routine, work, eat, sleep, and work again, with only two convenient modes of diversion—namely, to gamble or get hilariously drunk.

The connection between the range rider and the bonanza kings being established, let us take a look at Luke—no witticism intended, if you please.

Like most of his fellows of the range, sun and wind had tanned his face to leathery darkness. For size, he was nothing striking—five foot ten, perhaps. A lean-bodied man, all tough bone and sinew, with a deceptively youthful face. Luke had just turned thirty, but he seemed scarce twenty-five—until one stared critically. Temperamentally he verged upon the impulsively explosive. Wherefore—as a result of many mishaps engendered by this headlong tendency—he practiced restraint to the point of mildness; a habit which sometimes led the unthinking into grievous error. For when Luke acted he always made up for previous hesitation.

In the middle of an afternoon of drizzling rain, Luke, his one helper, and the seven carloads of live stock detrained in the Seattle yards. The buyer was waiting, on pins and needles. With flood tide some time that night, an Alaska boat sailed. The three of them unloaded and drove the horses through the streets to the dock. There they were hustled, clubbed, and otherwise persuaded down an incline into the dark bowels of the ship.

Luke had never seen salt water nor salt-water craft. Not that he was purely unsophisticated—he had gyrated through towns of consequence as far east as the State of Illinois; always in transient phase. But his business was handling stock, singly or in the mass. Given a horse, a saddle, and a rope, he was master of his trade, no matter what the surrounding might be. This was speedily demonstrated to the buyer of the T Downs. When the last cayuse was aboard, he approached Luke.

"My name's Bickle," he announced. "Say, what's the matter with a little trip north? I can use another man that sabes horses. Five dollars a day and grub. What yuh say?"

Luke poked absently with his toe at the saddle lying on the wharf planks, and thought the matter over. Five dollars a day sounded big—more than he had ever drawn as steady pay. Why not? He wasn't married to the T Down. He hadn't even said he would come back.

"How long'll this job last?" he inquired, as a slight precaution.

"Three or four months, anyhow," Bickle returned. "And there'll be lots of chances to make a stake up there, believe me."

"I'm with you," Luke decided. "What about Smith, here?"

"Smith—h-m-m!" Bickle eyed the second T Down man noncommittally. But he was saved the trouble of giving an answer, for Smith himself put in:

"Not muchee! Not for *ten* dollars a day—I come across the Gulf uh Mexico once. No more for me! I'm goin' back home after I've took in this town."

"Better come aboard, Freeman," Bickle suggested. "I'll get your passage fixed up. We'll sail about three in the morning."

"I'm goin' to take a look around," Luke returned mildly. "I'll be here in time."

"Better not get to celebratin'," Bickle warned, out of the fullness of his experience with men fresh from the plains. "These boats ain't like a cow

outfit—they don't wait for nothin' nor nobody."

"Aw, I'll be here!" Luke answered shortly.

He did, however, suffer his riding rig to be stowed aboard, and went with Bickle to get his berth allotted. That done, he took up his war bag and departed with Bill Smith.

"I'll get me a room to lay up in while I'm pacin' around this town," Smith confided. "We can slick up and see somethin' to-night. Whatcha wanta go to Alaska for, anyhow, Luke?"

"Just for fun," Luke answered lightly. Which was probably as near the truth as a man ever gets when he gives a reason for doing anything offhand.

Getting a room was a comparatively simple matter, even though Seattle was crowded with all sorts and conditions of men bound headlong for the gold fields. Bill Smith was no carping critic in the matter of accommodation—he took the first place that came handy. Getting "slicked up" was also a simple task. Smith changed his overalls for a pair of cloth trousers, whacked his hat against his leg, in lieu of brushing the dust therefrom, tied a different knot in his neckerchief, and was ready. Luke made a trifle more elaborate preparation. He unearthed a fairly presentable suit from his war bag, and graced the collar of a black sateen shirt with a new tie. His boots were new, likewise his hat. Altogether, he was quite resplendent—in the eyes of his less ambitious range partner. Thus equipped, they set forth, faring first to a restaurant.

At ten o'clock, Luke found himself facing the city of Seattle foot-loose and single-handed. In just what manner he had become separated from Bill Smith he could not say. They had been in divers places, had partaken of sundry drinks. Though the black sky dripped intermittent showers of fine rain, the avenue they had been traversing was crowded with people, coming and going in confusing numbers. By some twist in the crush, Smith had lost him, or he had lost Smith. That was, however, a small matter to Luke. He was not sighing for Bill Smith. He knew from that gentleman's idea of pleasure, and the gait he was going, where he would probably land while the night was still young, and Luke had no desire to bear him company on any dubious rambles.

So he wandered along Second Avenue, vastly taken with the glitter of manifold street lights and shop windows, the ceaseless movement of people; his nostrils, so long accustomed to the dry, light air of the plains, keenly alive to the damp, saline odors that wafted up from the bay. Down there, a steamer was waiting to bear him away from all this human stir and roaring traffic. Meantime——

He followed Second Avenue southward until the crowd began to thin and windows full of merchandise gave way to cheap chophouses and saloons. He turned off, then, and poked a few blocks east, and presently found himself in a dim-lighted, unsavory quarter. On beyond this area he could see a brilliant-windowed section. While he stood hesitant, about to retrace his steps, the distant tinkle of a piano reached faintly to his ears. And that decided Luke. Music, anything from a mouth harp to a full orchestra, set his blood dancing. He strolled in the direction whence this sound came, and presently observed, with a shrug of his shoulders, that by odd chance his wanderings had led him to where the lid was off—where the night life of the town, segregated in a district of its own, plied its feverish traffic with wine and dance and song. He stopped at the first saloon on the outskirts of the Tenderloin to get a glass of beer, for the long walk had bred thirst.

Stepping once more into the street, he paused on the outer edge of the side-

walk to roll a cigarette, alert to his surroundings, for the sum total of his worldly wealth was in his pockets, and he was well aware of the dubious character of the region close at hand. Once in Salt Lake City, under similar circumstances, a stranger had politely desired to know the time, and when Luke hauled forth his watch to see, he found himself looking down the barrel of a pistol, and later suffered the humiliation of seeing this deft highwayman melt into the night, the richer by his, Luke Freeman's, watch, six-shooter, and sixty dollars in cash.

Therefore, when a rubber-tired hack ambled slowly past, he watched it idly. A little beyond, it wheeled and came back, halting finally almost where he stood. The driver got down, exchanged a word or two with some one inside, then walked into the saloon.

Luke struck a match, and as he applied it to his cigarette he thought he heard a startled exclamation from the hack. Turning his head, he caught a glimpse of a girl's face framed in the lowered window space of the carriage, a mere flash, for it was instantly withdrawn.

At the same moment a man strode briskly from the saloon front to the door of the hack.

"Evenin', sis," said he. "Nice little night for a ride, eh?"

Luke saw the window begin to rise, but the man laid hand on the sash.

"Tut, tut!" he grinned. "No use tryin' to be so exclusive."

In the glow of a near-by street lamp Luke could see a part of his face, smooth and round, graced with a dark mustache ornately curled on the ends. He was a bigger man than Luke, broader, taller, but Luke felt an almost irresistible desire to mix in then and there. Th mere action gave him an instantaneous dislike for the man. Of course he might have been addressing his familiar remarks to an acquaintance. Still, Luke had an acute conviction that the fellow was merely "getting gay" with a woman, and that, in Luke's code, was a sin unpardonable. He edged a little nearer. The girl's voice sounded low and tense.

"Will you go on about your business —or shall I call a policeman?"

The man smirked placatingly through the window.

"Aw, now say!" he expostulated. "Quit yer kiddin', Jane."

Luke jostled him roughly, purposely, with malice aforethought. He had heard quite enough.

"Hit the trail while the going's good." he snapped. "I'll spoil that pretty complexion uh yours, if you don't. The lady's told you you're in the wrong pew. Drift!"

Luke's unbounded contempt for a "masher" came near resulting disastrously for him right on the spot. His private opinion was that a man who would gratuitously force himself on a woman was all yellow, a cur that would take a kick, and run. For once, opinion and fact were at variance. The man recovered his balance, glared at Luke, and burst into speech.

"Hol*ee* Mackinaw!" he grunted.

Then, with a wonderfully quick motion for a man of his size, he wriggled out of his light raincoat and launched a straight, swift punch at Luke Freeman's jaw.

More by instinct than anything else, Luke rolled his head and the fist grazed his cheek. But he was now in no better case, for his assailant clinched, and the grip he strove for was no new one to Luke, who was somewhat experienced in the gentle art of rough-and-tumble himself. When he was twenty, Luke's favorite declaration of independence was, "The bigger they are, the harder they fall," and ten years had not caused him to modify this, only made him a trifle less spontaneous in demonstration of its truth. What skill and strength

he possessed he therefore brought into play with a dynamic fierceness which in a short tussle freed him from that dangerous hold. There was no question of fair play involved. Already his antagonist had made earnest efforts to gouge Luke's eyes with the thumb of one free hand.

What transpired while they two heaved and strained and tumbled on that wet, slippery pavement, Luke did not have time to observe. He was too busy with the job in hand. He had a subconscious impression of a woman's voice. At any rate, by twist and trick he had wrenched himself free, had landed one earnest blow that started a stream of blood from the black-mustached one's nose, and was slugging his man up against the saloon front, when he was jerked smartly backward—and, turning to meet this rear attack, faced a blue-coated policeman. An upraised nightstick betokened that functionary's determination to quell the fracas by radical measures, if necessary.

"I'm peaceable," Luke panted. Which was scarcely a truthful description of his mood.

"You better be," the officer retorted. But he released his hold on Luke's collar. "What's all this row about, anyway?"

"Run this guy in!" snarled the other man. "I'm standin' here, mindin' my own business, and he comes along and starts sluggin' me. Run him in! I'll make a complaint!"

Luke kept still. He doubted the wisdom of saying what he was sorely tempted to say, because his tongue had a nasty habit of running away with him at such times. And he was not too fighting mad to remember that he was slated to board a steamer at three a. m., or thereabouts. Which he might not have opportunity to do if he uttered a few of the things he thought, and thereby became involved with a policeman.

But he had a champion at hand with no hesitancy of speech.

"That's a lie!" said a feminine voice at his elbow.

Luke turned his head. The girl had stepped from the hack, one hand holding her skirt clear of the wet, the other touching the officer's arm to fix his attention.

"If anybody should be run in, as you call it," she cried, "it's that man. He was annoying me through the hack window, and this gentleman told him to stop—and he threw off his coat and began to fight."

"That'll be about all from you," the officer growled. "You can tell the rest in court. I guess I'll send 'em both up in the wagon. There's a little too much rough-house goin' on over you dames around here lately."

He piped a shrill call to a brother officer somewhere in the red-windowed streets beyond, and ordered his two prisoners to stand back against the wall. Mouthing loud protest, the big man picked up his coat and began to argue the point. Luke had stood quietly, his hands hanging beside him. At the policeman's order he had a quick vision of the situation. He was "pinched." If he went jailward in the black Maria the *City of Puebla* would certainly sail without him. Being freed in the morning would be no benefit whatever. He remembered that he had a perfectly good ninety-dollar riding rig stowed aboard—to say nothing of a five-dollar job. Besides, Luke resented arrest under any circumstances—much less for merely coming to a woman's aid.

Almost before he had cogently reasoned out any plan he had acted. Beyond them the street was dim, with a black-mouthed alley giving on to it. He recalled passing that alley. At hand, the policeman was paying more attention to his refractory prisoner. The hack driver had come out of the saloon, and Luke heard him say to the girl:

"He ain't there, miss."

Then the man stood uncertainly by the wheel of his vehicle. The girl was staring at Luke. His brain was afire with other things, but he had an impression of a wonderfully appealing face, oval, perfectly formed features, slightly parted, full, red lips, and big, sympathetic eyes.

And that instant he made his break for liberty. The policeman had poked him in the ribs with his club, ordering him gruffly to line up against the wall, and be quick about it. His big, angular jaw was temptingly outthrust—and Luke's hard-knuckled fist shot upward from the region of his hip.

CHAPTER II.

CLOSE QUARTERS.

The policeman did not flop backward, like a man floored with a straight-arm blow. Nevertheless, Luke had delivered the hardest punch in his collection, as the sharp, stabbing pains that ran from the back of his hand clear to his elbow testified, and the officer was out on his feet. He swayed a moment. His knees sagged, and buckled under him, and he sank down and forward, like one giving way under too great a weight across the shoulders.

Luke swept the street with a glance. His friend of the mustache stood with mouth agape. The girl's hands were clasped tight together, a startled look of wonder on her face. The hack driver was clambering nimbly to his seat.

Then Luke turned and ran.

Behind him came the patter of light footfalls. He looked back. The hackman was by now lashing his horses around the nearest corner, and his late fare was flying at Luke's heels. Behind her, thirty yards or so, lumbered the cause of all the trouble, whether in flight or pursuit, Luke could not say. But he slackened pace to let the girl catch up. He could not leave her in such a plight—even though he knew he had put the fat in the fire by felling a limb of the law.

"Oh!" the girl panted, "what in the world—the hackman ran off without me. And this brute is coming!"

"Gimme your hand," said Luke. "And run! I'll see yuh through. We gotta get out o' sight before that cop comes to, or another one sights us! Run!"

Holding that soft hand in his, and partly dragging the girl with him, Luke raced along the street. The alley mouth, black as a cellar, opened presently before them, and into this they turned. He did not know whither it led, but it must have an opening, he decided, and once well away on a quiet street he could put that unsafe section of the city behind him at a more leisurely pace.

But it seemed that the other man had also an eye to the alley. They could hear the quick *tuck, tuck, tuck* of his feet on the concrete. Then the sound suddenly died. Luke and the girl slowed down. They were in dense shadow, and the police no longer a factor in Luke's calculations. He was vastly more concerned with the mustached man.

"Let's stop and listen!" he whispered.

They shrank into the concealing blankness of a recessed doorway. Except for far-distant sounds they might have been huddling in one of Luke's mountain cañons, so dark it was, and silent. But presently, Luke made out sounds of soft, stealthy approach—the man presumably with whom he had exchanged blows.

"That son of a gun isn't makin' a getaway," he whispered. "Wonder if he's still lookin' for trouble?"

Pressed close up against him, he could feel a slight quivering of her slender body. He himself was not altogether as cool as a cornered hero is

supposed to be under similar circumstances. As a matter of fact, Luke would have been highly pleased to find himself well out of the scrape. But he was still truculent. The habits of a lifetime sent his hand to the short-barreled six-shooter resting snugly within the waistband of his trousers. The girl felt the motion, and seemed to understand.

"No, no!" she whispered tensely. "That would be the worst thing you could do! Wait! Maybe he'll pass us, or go back!"

"Don't get scared," Luke assured under his breath. "I won't shoot. But I busted my hand on that cop's jaw. If this feller starts a fuss I got to slap him on the head with this, that's all!"

"All right," she whispered back. "But wait!"

He passed them, the man Luke surmised, sure enough. They could make him out but dimly, and them he could not see at all, unless he had felt for them. And it was the merest chance that he failed to do that very thing, for he was searching the alley most assiduously as he went.

"That jasper's mighty persistent," Luke observed. "Darn him! He's prowlin' in this alley, and we can't get out the way we come in. Liable to be a policeman lookin' along there by now."

"Listen!" the girl warned.

The man was coming back. He passed them a second time, so slowly and warily that he was but a dim, gliding shape.

"Now," said Luke, "let's get out the other way."

Holding hands, they tiptoed down the alley. Fifty yards—a hundred—suddenly they brought up against a solid wall. On one side the building was broken with shuttered windows. On their right a door stood slightly ajar, revealing a stairway, with a lone electric bulb at its head.

"Sufferin' Jemima!" Luke muttered. "We're in a corner now, for sure. And here comes our friend, trailin' us like a hound pup!

"Let's back up," he declared. "If that jasper tries to stop us I'll lay him out!"

"Try the stairs," the girl whispered tremulously. "I went down the street facing here not long ago. They're mostly rooming houses. We might go right through the hall, down the front stairs, and so on to the street. If that brute should attack us there might be a noise that would bring half a dozen police. Try the stairs."

"All right," Luke agreed. "Though I'd just as soon have it out with that feller right here in the alley, as go prowlin' in a strange house."

They went, cat-footed, up the stairs. On the landing a vista of narrow hall stretched ahead, with a small red globe glowing dully against a curtained window at the farther end. Luke glanced back.

"Lord!" he muttered. "I wish I'd fixed that duck while I was at it!"

For the black-mustached man was peering in the open door. And now he came up the stairs, three steps at a time.

Luke and the girl fled down the hall. A narrow width of thin carpet only in part deadened their footfalls. A little way before they gained the stairway which led to the main street entrance a door flashed open before them and a man blocked the way. Behind him issued another. Both were in shirt sleeves. The first wore a green shade over his eyes.

"Well! How d'ye do, Mr. Man," the first greeted. "Stop! Right where you are!"

He made a movement that to Luke, who had been privileged to witness a certain amount of gun play, seemed justly significant. In such a case there was but one thing to do—and Luke did not hesitate. His Colt flashed

straightly to a level upon the speaker's midriff, and Luke kept coming.

"Get outa the way! *Quick!*"

Luke meant it, and the tone of him seemed to be utterly convincing; so much so that the man collided violently with the other behind in his haste to obey. And as he passed the doorway Luke heard this second person exclaim:

"It *is* Graves, by thunder!"

Whatever he meant was lost upon Luke, though he heard plainly enough. He was solely concerned with getting out of there—and there was still the black-mustached man to reckon with. He swung about, facing back down the hall. And none too soon, for their pursuer was almost up; a thin stream of blood still trickling from his nostrils to attest the vigor of Luke's punching.

"Get down the stairs," he ordered the girl. "I'll hold this crowd back."

She slipped past him obediently, and with his gun on the three men—for his late antagonist stopped short in the face of the six-shooter and the steel-gray eye squinting over it—Luke backed carefully down the hall.

"This way," the girl spoke. A swift side glance showed him, indeed, a stairway leading down.

Luke's attention wavered briefly as his heel alighted on the fourth step. And since he was dealing with men fully as quick-witted and determined as himself, that was an opportunity they did not fail to seize. In the instant his eyes wandered something catapulted from that doorway above and struck him fairly on the head. What sort of missile it was he did not perceive, nor have time to learn, for it knocked him down, overbalancing the girl as he fell against her, so that she tumbled a step or two, with a little suppressed cry. A multitude of bright spots coruscated before Luke's eyes. Before he could straighten up, the three were fairly on top of him. And simultaneously the light on the landing blinked out.

Afterward he wondered why they did not finish him before he had time to move a finger, and ascribed it to sheer luck. Which may have been partly true, but not wholly so. Luke's fingers, momentarily dazed as he was, did not relax about the grip of the gun. He was by no means knocked out. And when the first man, who happened to be the one who had checked him in the hall, lit on him bodily, almost depriving Luke of what breath he had left, he still managed to give himself a heave that sent the pair of them, clinched, rolling over and over downstairs. Luke's gun hand came free in the tumbling process. He rapped his assailant smartly across the back of the head with the short, heavy barrel, and the man went limp.

Then Luke, with the flaccid weight across him, threw restraint to the winds. He burned with a perfectly justifiable anger. Neither law and order, civic ordinances, nor any other consideration, counterbalanced the hot determination to get himself and the girl out of the hands of that gang. He turned the Colt up the stairway and fired twice.

Luke listened a second. The rank smell of burned powder enveloped him. But absolute silence had fallen, save for a faint scuffling above. Then he freed himself of the unconscious man and leaped to the foot of the stairs. The girl was cowering against the door. Luke yanked it open, and closed it behind them. Two broad steps set them on a street dotted at far intervals with arc lamps. A wagon rolled by. Here and there a lone pedestrian stalked along.

"The police will be here in a minute!" cried the girl.

"Let's get around the corner, then," Luke proposed. "We're out of there, anyway. That's the main thing."

"Don't hurry!" her woman's wit impelled her to caution. "If the officers should be coming that would look sus-

picious. Walk as if you were just out for a stroll."

Luke had put away his gun. The girl linked her arm through his, and they moved with outward sedateness along to the nearest corner, turned that, walked three blocks a little more rapidly, and whipped sharp into Second Avenue south.

"Ah!" Her breath came with a sudden, relieved exhalation. "We're safe, I do believe. Those men—did you——"

"No," Luke muttered. "I ought to have, but I didn't. I only shot to scare 'em. What in thunder was it all about, d'you know? Those fellers seemed to think they knew me. And they sure wanted to *get* me. Did yuh notice?"

The girl said nothing. On the corner of the next block she halted and looked up at him.

"I can get on from here," she said abruptly.

"Better let me take you home," Luke suggested.

"No. But you can put me on the next car," she murmured. "I don't know how to thank you—and I can't explain. You risked a lot. Men don't champion a girl that way—as a general thing. I—good-by. There's a car."

They were on a corner, but the shadow of a big, unlighted window partly concealed them, and there were few people on the street. They stood very close together, and the girl's face was turned up, wistfully, it seemed to Luke. She was undeniably beautiful—and Luke was quite human in his impulses, and sometimes headlong in following them. He kissed her.

"Oh!" she murmured, and drew back from him. He could dimly see the swift flush that dyed her cheek.

"I won't beg your pardon for that," Luke said recklessly. "You never saw me before, and probably never will again—seein' you're about to take your own trail, and keep it covered. I did that to remember you by. I sure will remember you, and this hilarious night!"

She stared at him with a queer, thoughtful expression, which presently twisted the corners of her mouth into a faint smile.

"You *are* different," she said, to herself as much as to him. This was a trifle enigmatical to Luke, and he forbore to reply. In truth, that unpremeditated kiss had filled him with new and disturbing emotions. He felt suddenly lonely, reluctant to let her go, and he was a bit ashamed of the feeling.

As the advancing street car drew up abreast, and they stepped into the street, Luke noticed absently the girl fumbling at her throat. As he stood by the step and took her by the arm to help her up, he was conscious of a momentary tug at his coat pocket. But he thought nothing of that.

And the next instant she was gone, rolling away up Second Avenue on a northbound car.

Left to himself, Luke was called to a physical realization of strenuous experiences. His right hand was badly swollen, and the pain of it extended far up his arm. His head throbbed and burned. Moreover, he felt sick and giddy, and his brain did not seem to work with its accustomed precision.

When a range rider is ailing he takes a drink. Whisky fulfills many of the functions of medicine in a land where doctors and drugs are often a hundred miles distant in time of need. So Luke turned into the first saloon he found. Leaving that, he walked another block. Once more the weak feeling attacked his knees, and a horrible sinking sensation centered at the pit of his stomach. He sought another bar. The whisky braced him, spurred his laggard nerves to their accustomed reactions.

Thus, by grace of divers hospitable places where red liquor, in shining bottle, was dispensed for a price, Luke at last reached the room where he and

Bill Smith had "slicked up" early in the evening.

He looked at his watch. It was eleven o'clock. He had plenty of time. Also he was deathly sick—partly from the effects of whisky, partly from the combined excitement and injury. The back of his hand felt like an aching tooth, and there was a lump on top of his head an inch thick. It was no more than ten minutes' walk to the dock where the *Puebla* lay. His war bag was packed and ready. He lay down on the bed to gather strength for the effort.

When Luke opened his eyes again the yellow fingers of the sun were poking in the window. He raised on elbow dazedly, with sundry keen physical twinges. Beside him on the bed sprawled Bill Smith, red-faced, his mouth agape, and raucous sounds issuing therefrom.

For ten seconds Luke could not get head or tail of anything. He groped in a mental fog. His mouth was dry, and filled with a horrible taste, and his head ached acutely—symptoms which were not wholly unknown in his experience. But above all this he had a sense of something important undone, something neglected.

His first coherent recollection was of that five-dollar job and his riding rig stowed safely on the *City of Puebla*—which was to sail at three a. m.

"And it's nine now," Luke groaned, hauling out his watch. "Oh, I'm the prize pup, all right!"

Treading fast on the heels of this came a confused memory of the tumultuous incidents of last night. In sober day it seemed utterly fantastic and unbelievable that he should have fought a stranger in the street, felled a policeman, fled through blind alleys and strange houses with a girl he had never seen before. Yes, even kissed her on the street corner. Luke shook his aching head, and doubted the flood of memory stuff.

He had been drunk, and fought some one. That was likely enough. His furred mouth, sore head, and swollen hand, with its skinned knuckles, were indubitable evidence of some such antics.

He shook Bill Smith into semi-wakefulness.

"Say!" he demanded. "Where'd we go last night, and what'd we do?"

"Huh?" That son of the plains opened one bloodshot eye. "One big time. Betchu!"

"Was I drunk?" Luke asked.

"Drunk? Course yuh was drunk. Drunk's a boiled owl. Same's me," Smith contributed his mite.

"Didn't we get split up?" Luke persisted, trying to marshal in orderly array that which his memory declared to be fact, but which he could not as yet credit.

"Nary split. What'd we split for? Nossir! Went down the line t'gether. Wasn't we partners? Darn yuh, I put yuh to bed like a white man. Betchu!"

Luke held his head in his palms for a minute. When he looked around, Smith was snoring again, rank alcoholic odors arising with each respiration. Luke went over to a window and threw up the sash. He sat down with his face turned to the incoming rush of fresh air.

"Funny I'd get so polluted I'd imagine all them things so real," he reflected. "I never did before. I don't sabe a-tall."

Presently he began to rummage in his trousers pockets. His watch he had already looked at. His fingers now brought forth sundry pieces of silver coin, bills, and a worn purse. He counted his cash.

"I had a hundred and ten when I struck town," he communed. "I paid for our supper and some drinks that I know of. I still got a hundred and five. Now, I never went out on a bender with Bill Smith nor anybody else

without spendin' a bunch of money. *That's* a cinch!"

He sat a minute or two deep in thought. Then abstractedly he began to feel in his coat pocket for cigarette material. And in so doing his fingers encountered some foreign object. He drew it out—and his mouth opened wide in astonishment. For it was a locket, a heavy gold locket, the diameter of a fifty-cent piece, with a fine-linked chain dangling thereto. And in that same instant Luke's memory recalled how the girl had fumbled at her throat, and how as they came to the car steps he felt something touch his pocket. He sprang the locket open—and that now well-remembered face smiled frankly out at him.

"She give it to me! Bless her little heart!" he whispered. And then, manlike, he immediately felt ashamed of verging upon the sentimental. But the kiss he had stolen still seemed warm upon his lips.

For a long time he sat staring at the tiny photo in its frame of gold.

"I ain't sorry I missed that boat, after all," he whispered to himself, at last. "It was worth it!"

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH MR. FREEMAN SEES HIMSELF ACROSS THE STREET.

Luke stared at Bill Smith, snoring industriously on the bed. He was used to the intoxicated vagaries of the Bill Smith ilk, and it was now amusing to recall Bill's positive assertion that they had gone "down the line" together. Just the same, the trinket in his hand, and the amazing scope of his adventures in so brief a span—though every detail now stood forth with vivid clearness in his mind—left him with a pretty mystery on his hands, as well as a locket, and the thrill of a stolen kiss.

Luke was too open and aboveboard to lie a contented bedfellow with a mystery. By nature and training he disliked and resented the devious and unexplained. There was the inexplicable circumstance of the dark-mustached man's apparent recognition, instant hostility, and persistent trailing up of him, after an episode which should by all odds have sent him scurrying to cover. Then that brief remark of the man in the hallway, "It *is* Graves, by thunder!" All three of the men had seemed to want his scalp, and want it badly. Why? Luke was positive he had never laid eyes on any one of the three.

"I guess they took me for somebody else," Luke decided at last. "Somebody they sure had it in for. By Jiminy, I'd like to know what it was all about! That jasper wasn't so dead set to get me for pastin' him beeause he bothered a girl. And the two in the house—even supposin' they were his pals—they jumped me on sight."

He turned the locket, and perceived that certain initials were engraved on it in the form of a monogram, which he eventually deciphered as F. D. G.

G. in his mind at once recalled "Graves."

"By Jiminy!" he muttered. "That's what the pot-bellied feller called me! I wonder? And she was huntin' for somebody, too! A girl like her wouldn't be down in that tough country unless it was a pinch!"

That might be her name. And the man these hostile plug-uglies took him for might be her brother or her husband—no, Luke rejected the latter relationship. He couldn't think of her as being married—he utterly refused to consider the possibility; though he was candid enough to remind himself that it was none of his business anyway. He recalled that she had proffered no explanation when he had wondered who his assailants took him for, and what was their object. And Luke was nimble

enough mentally to surmise from the hack driver's remark that she was making a search for some one. And there must have been a compelling reason for that search, he decided.

Certainly it was a proper tangle. Having lost a good job and a saddle that he valued, and also suffered a broken hand and bruised head in the mix-up, Luke felt a decidedly personal interest. But so far as he could see, a blank wall raised ahead. Luke took thought to himself whether it would be altogether wise to go camping on the trail of that locket. Yet its very presence in his pocket, knowing how it came there, seemed like a challenge—and Luke had passed up few "dares" in his tumultuous span of years.

Meantime, sitting beside the open window, the ache in his head abated. He began to feel hungry, and, being a social animal by instinct, he rudely shook Bill Smith out of his noisy slumber.

"Hey, grub pile," he exhorted, "roll out! You've pounded your ear long enough!"

Smith eventually banished his alcoholic drowsiness, and after liberal applications of cold water to his flushed face, found himself tolerably steady on his legs, and normal in speech. So they set out to encompass breakfast.

"She's some town, this, all right, all right," Smith confided, over their ham and eggs. "But I don't know's a man gets so much of a run for his money, after all. I like to got into a scrap with a bartender last night. He didn't want to hear me yell. I ain't got no use for a place where it's against the rules for a man to let a whoop outa him if he feels like it. Darn it, what's the difference if a feller does holler once in a while, so long as he don't get noisy? Furthermore, all in thunder yuh can do here is get good an' drunk. The poker games is braced an' boosted to a fare yuh well. I may be a pilgrim when it comes to this here city life—but I sure know a crooked poker game when I see it starin' me in the face. I guess I'll drift back. I'd rather blow in m' money in Malta, anyhow, where I know folks. Say! Wasn't you goin' north on that boat with the horses, Luke? Change your mind?"

Luke nodded, without further committing himself. Bill Smith was no safe confidant, he felt sure. And Luke was a mite sheepish about losing his saddle. That would be no creditable yarn to circulate around the Larb Hill ranges—as Bill would surely see that it did, if he knew. Luke had halfway made up his mind to go back. In broad daylight, mingling with everyday folk who bustled about commonplace affairs, last night's lurid happenings again began to take on an incredible aspect.

"Say," Bill remarked, as they pushed back their chairs, "I just had a hunch to buy me some glad rags before I slough the bank roll. I'm still seventy strong, after last night's blow-out. I got free transportation back to Montana. I'm goin' to buy me a blue suit like you got on."

"Go to it," Luke encouraged.

"Yes, sir," Bill Smith pursued. "I'll do that right off, while I think of it. I'll buy me one uh them suits, and go right up to the room an' put it on. I'm a pretty rough-lookin' jasper, an' that's no lie."

"I'll meet you at the room in about a hour," said Luke. "I got to go see about my saddle."

"What you do with it?" Smith demanded, with the freedom characteristic of the range clan.

"Nothin' yet. Feller down here said he might buy it," Luke prevaricated cheerfully. "Give me a chance to blow m'self to a brand-new outfit, if he does. Trot along and buy that suit uh clothes."

Luke went straight to the dock.

There was a bare chance that Bickle might have chucked the riding outfit ashore at the last moment, when he saw that his man did not turn up. Bickle, Luke recalled, seemed to know something about cow-punchers.

And evidently Bickle had guessed that Luke's foot had slipped somewhere, for his saddle, bridle, and chaps were piled in the wharfinger's office; and on that functionary's desk lay a note addressed to him:

> MR. LUKE FREEMAN: I told you this boat wasn't like a cow outfit. You cost me twenty-five dollars transportation, which the steamship company won't refund. No hard feelings, though. Boys will run on the rope. If you catch the S. S. *Traveler*, sailing two weeks from to-night, the job still goes as I said. Ask for me at the Hooper Hotel, Skagway. MIKE BICKLE.

"He's a prince, that man Bickle," Luke thought ruefully. "I'm plumb sorry I disappointed him. But, by gosh, I don't know whether I want to go to Alaska or not. I'm like Smithy. I got half a notion to hit the trail home."

Luke also had another half a notion lurking surreptitiously in the back of his mind—to stay right here in Seattle, and just—well, just look around. That was the way he put it to himself.

He was considering this matter, and walking more or less mechanically up the lower end of Cherry Street, having put the decrepit red structure which in those days served as Seattle's railway depot a block or two behind him, when he happened to glance across the way.

Luke stopped short. He had a speaking acquaintance with his own likeness, from a lifetime of observance of his features in shaving mirrors and the like. Wherefore he was more than a little astonished to behold across the street a perfect counterpart of himself. The man was facing him. Line for line, his face was the double of Luke Freeman's. Even over fifty feet of space, Luke marveled at the extraordinary resemblance. His size, general build, and carriage all served to emphasize this fact.

Into Luke's mind, accustomed by his mode of life to think quick, and act accordingly, shot the idea that here, all ready to his hand, perhaps, stood a living explanation of last night's peculiar and riotous sequence of events.

"I'll bet a dollar to a doughnut that's a party name uh Graves," said Luke—and was stepping briskly across the street when he said it.

But the curiosity was evidently not mutual, for, as Luke crossed, the man turned on his heel and passed through the swinging doors of a saloon just beyond—walking with a decided unsteadiness in his gait, Luke observed.

And when he entered the bar, and swept the place with a glance, his twin was nowhere to be seen. Luke walked clear through to the lavatory, glanced into a pool room opening off the saloon, saw that an exit debouched from thence upon another street. Then he came back to the bar, ordered a glass of beer, and drank it slowly, with an eye roving the long room. But his man did not again appear.

Luke presently took to the street again, in exceeding bad humor. It was altogether like things he had read in detective fiction, where the villain of the piece dodges through convenient exits and is lost to the wildly pursuing hero. It smacked of the theatrical—the whole array of incidents since ten the previous night. It exasperated him, if for no other reason than the arousing of a consuming desire to know the why and wherefore, and the apparent hopelessness of gratifying that pardonable curiosity.

"Aw, hang the whole business!" he exploded, as he bore off up for the fifth block on Cherry Street, where his lodging was. "I'm a chump to bother my head about it. I guess I'll go sack

up my saddle and hit the trail with Bill. Blast these disappearing men and girls!"

But all the while his fingers were lingering with a touch that was almost a caress on that gold bauble in his pocket. Back of the rough-house fighters on the edge of the Tenderloin, and the exasperating disappearance of an individual who presumably held the key to the riddle, loomed a sweet and troubled face, with honest, innocent, appealing eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

HEADLONG BILL SMITH.

Luke carried that vision with him up to the room, and sat down by the window. Bill was not in yet, but that was no matter; he would be presently. Luke leaned his elbows on the sill, and straightway fell to speculating upon matters which he had but shortly before declared his intention of passing up.

He recalled minutely the exact appearance of this individual who so strangely resembled himself. They wore suits of blue serge, identical in cut. With the two exceptions of boots and hat, they were dressed alike. Even in these details there was not so great a difference. Luke wore a white Stetson, a style of headgear by no means restricted to the range. The other had on a black hat of similar shape. Where Luke's feet were incased in the high-heeled riding boots of the stockman, the other wore tan shoes.

For a long time Luke remained deep in thought. Then he got up, with a scowl, stalked downstairs, and went out along the street to certain stores he remembered having seen on Second Avenue.

He was back in twenty minutes or so, bearing a bulky paper bag in one hand, an oblong, angular parcel in the other.

"Huh!" he grunted. "It sure does take Bill Smith a powerful long time to buy a suit of clothes."

Then he opened his bundles. When he had properly bestowed their contents he stood up before the dresser glass. A black felt hat rested jauntily on his smooth brown hair. His boots had given way to tan shoes.

"Now," said he, a trifle defiantly, and self-consciously, "we'll see what'll happen."

Then he sat down to wait for Bill.

An hour dragged by. That gentleman still failing to put in an appearance, Luke grew decidedly restless. Not on Bill Smith's account, but on his own. To sit in a more or less stuffy room when a city lay to his hand, all unexplored, was not much to his liking. There was another matter besides his tentative promise to meet Bill at the room. His injured hand was growing steadily more painful, and Luke, who had experienced broken bones before, decided that he would better rely on a physician's treatment than on the ordinary efficacy of mere liniment. So he scrawled a message to Bill, left it on the bed, and went out again.

When Luke returned to the room, with his hand bandaged, and the discomforting knowledge that he had two fractured metacarpals—whatever they might be—Bill Smith was still absent, the note still undisturbed.

"I wonder if that son of a gun is whoopin' it up again?" Luke grumbled.

It was now well past noon, but Luke was not hungry. He lay down on the bed, and since his sleep had been sadly broken the past three nights, quite naturally his eyes soon closed. At three he wakened, and sought a near-by coffee-house. By that time he was growing a little uneasy. Seattle was vibrant with the hectic stir of a gold stampede, full of soldiers of fortune from all quarters of the continent—a wide-open town. That was patent to any one. And Bill was not the sort who preferred to wan-

der alone in strange pastures. But he was a man grown, and, as such, supposedly able to take care of himself. Your range man is essentially self-reliant, and ascribes that quality to his fellows without question. So Luke, while he wondered and became rather impatient, did not think of doing aught save bide Bill Smith's own good time. He went out, prowled around a little, but eventually came back.

And about six o'clock, just as Luke was about to seek a restaurant for a square meal, Bill stalked in. Luke turned an inquiring gaze on him. Bill was strictly sober. There was, however, an unwonted gleam in his mild blue eye. No new suit was in evidence.

"Well," Luke greeted genially. "Yuh lose you'self somewhere?"

"Naw," Bill grunted. "I was—aw, shucks——"

He took off his hat, and ran his fingers through a heavy poll of sandy hair, and immediately had resourse to cigarette material. Bill was strongly stirred. A blind man could have sensed it without the added gift of sight. Luke regarded him with heightened interest.

"What's eatin' on yuh?" he demanded bluntly. "Yuh look to me like a man with somethin' heavy on his mind."

Bill vouchsafed nothing beyond an absent grin.

"Sell your rig?" he asked, at length.

"Uh-uh," Luke returned. "Why? What's the matter, Bill?"

"Aw, nothin'," that gentleman replied. "Only I thought if you'd sold your saddle you'd want another one. I'd sell yuh mine, pretty cheap. It's a mighty good rig—better'n yours was, Luke. I don't reckon I'll need it no more."

"Sufferin' cats!" Luke ejaculated. "What's hit *you?* Get cleaned?"

Bill Smith drew a wadded-up handful of bills from his pocket, and waved it in wordless refutation of this last.

What the mischief, then?" Luke demanded. "This mornin' you was about to hit the trail home. Here you are to-night wantin' to slough off your ridin' outfit. What's up?"

"Well, I won't need it for a spell, I guess. I'm through ridin' for a while—unless it's on a wagon. I got me a job in a livery barn at sixty-five a month. And"—he paused a moment before he exploded his final bomb—"I'm goin' to be married to-night!"

Luke threw up his hands. Bill Smith—job in a livery stable—marriage! But the look on Bill's homely face made him check his mirth. Bill sat down on the bed and leaned over the footrail confidentially, his face aglow.

"Sounds crazy, don't it?" he smiled at Luke. "But I ain't crazy. No, sir. Lemme tell yuh. It was the funniest thing—naw, there wasn't nothin' funny about it, either. But it was queer."

He relighted his cigarette. Normally slow of speech, the phrases now came tumbling headlong, tripping one upon the heels of the other. His hands waved in sweeping gesticulation.

"'Member I went off to buy me a suit uh clothes? Well, I didn't get no suit. I bought into somethin' a darned sight better—somethin' I didn't have no more idea of than the man in the moon.

"I was pacin' along the street, sizin' up clothes joints, an' by'nby, when I went to roll me a smoke I find I'm outa Durham. So I step into a place to get a sack. It's a dago joint, I guess, a little box stall jammed in between two big buildin's, with apples an' oranges, an' cigars an' such truck. You know.

"Whilst I'm standin' openin' the sack a girl comes in. I ain't much of a hand to stare at women. But this was a real cute-lookin' little girl, an' can't help sizin' her up. She's nice lookin'. One uh these here teeny, little, red-cheeked, round-faced girls, with big brown eyes. She wants ten cents' worth uh apples. When the feller hands over the bag she gives him a half dollar. When he passes

her the change they fumble it, an' the money drops. The dago picks some of it up and hands it to her.

"'There's a quarter yet,' says she, kinda anxious. The fruit man looks around.

"'Ah teenka he roll een da street,' says he.

"The front's all wide open to the sidewalk, y'know. The girl looks outside. Then she comes back an' looks on the floor again. I'm standin' back, watchin' the play, you sabe. An' I'm gettin' kinda sore. I see the whole thing, an' it looks pretty small. There's a break in the counter, and the quarter had rolled in there. This jasper he'd spotted it, an' after lookin' around a little he'd backed in there, put his foot on the two-bit piece, an' begin scuffin' it back outa sight. I seen him.

"He's short, heavy-set, greasy-lookin' cuss, an' he stands there smirkin' at the girl, an' tellin' her he's 'ver' soree. Ah teenka he rolla een da street, mees.' The girl begin to look awful down in the mouth about losin' her money. Her lip begins to quiver. Then I buys in.

"'You darned crook!' says I. 'Give the lady her money!'

"'You geeta outa my place!' he says. 'I calla da police!'

"When he springs that I just naturally get him by the neck an' bang his head against the show case. Then I yank him outa the break in the counter. There's the two bits—where he had it covered with his foot. He's wrigglin', an' tryin' to yelp, but I got him foul.

"'You son of a gun!' says I. 'For two pins I'd take yuh apart an' throw yuh into the street, a piece at a time! You petty larceny robber! There's somethin' comin' to you, all right!'

"'Oh, no, please!' the girl she says. 'Don't hit him! You'll get arrested!'

"'All right,' says I. 'Anythin' to oblige. There's your quarter, though.'

"She hurries to pick up the money, like it meant a lot to her. Then I give the dago a good yank or two, to show a man's got hold uh him, an' let him go.

"'Now,' says I, 'call in your police.'

"But I guess he's leary uh the cops himself, after us gettin' him dead to rights about the quarter, an' he don't do nothin' only finger his neck where I twisted it, an' sputter some lingo I don't sabe. So I take the girl by the arm an' walk out. She's plumb scared, an' just about to cry.

"We walk along the street a ways, an' get to talkin'. She's been workin' in a store, an' loses the job. She got another job comin' up in three or four days, but in the meantime she's got about as much cash to live on as you or me would spend for drinks between meals—if we didn't get too thirsty. That's what makes her fuss so over a quarter. Two bits is a lot uh money when yuh ain't got it.

"'Ain't yuh got no folks?' says I.

"'Not here,' she says. 'I got a sister in Portland, but my father an' mother is both dead.'

"'Yuh poor kid!' says I. 'I guess it's tough goin' for you, all right.'

"She says it isn't so bad as long as she can work steady. But, holy smoke, Luke, just think of a woman livin' on five dollars a week! Payin' room rent an' buyin' grub on about six bits a day!

"'Lady,' I says finally, 'I don't think yuh get much fun outa livin' that way. There's a feller told me about a park on a lake away out Madison Street. I'm a stranger here. If yuh ain't scared to go with me, what yuh say we take a ride out there?'

"'No,' she says, kinda smilin' up at me, 'I wouldn't be scared to go with you. You ain't a fresh guy like these town boys.'

"'How'd you know I ain't a city feller?' I asks her. 'Do I look an' act so much like a farmer?'

"'No,' she laughs. 'You're surely no rube. But you're not a city man, either.

I don't know why, but you're not, I don't think.'

"'You're dead right,' says I. 'I'm a cow-puncher, even if I don't look so awful wild an' woolly.'

"Well, we get to talkin' about cowmen an' the cattle country while we're hikin' for the Madison Street car. She knows Seattle like a book—in fact, she's born an' raised here, an' never been anywhere else, 'cept for short trips. By this time I'd plumb forgot about buyin' clothes, an' about you goin' to meet me at the room. When I did remember, it didn't worry me none.

"Say, we put in a beaut of a day out there, Luke, old boy. There was a band playin', an' all kinds uh boats an' canoes on the lake. I hired one an' took her out for a row. An' we danced a waltz or two on a open floor. An' had dinner about one in a little pavilion facin' on the water. She says to me once or twice:

"'You mustn't spend so much money on me!'

"Bless her little soul! I'd told her pretty much everything about m'self, an' she knowed I wasn't no millionaire. But we had the time of our young lives, an' I didn't blow more'n three or four dollars.

"Seemed like we was old pals that'd knowed each other ever so long, instead uh bein' strangers till this mornin'. An' I'd think to m'self once in a while, 'Suppose I go back to the T Down, I'll never see her again. An' she'll be buckin' the same hard old game all by her lonesome.' An' finally I says:

"'Lady, I'd like to spend lots uh days like this.'

"'Me, too,' she says, pretty sober all at once. 'It's been a dream. 'You've been a perfect gentleman, an' I've enjoyed it ever so much.'

"Now I been thinkin' a lot the last hour, an' before I knowed it I was spittin' out what I thought. Just opened m' mouth, an' out it come.

"'Lady,' says I, 'there's one way we could do it—if you're game to take a chance. You're foot-loose an' of legal age. So'm I. Maybe I'm kinda sudden, but that's the way I'm made. I'm a pretty good rustler—an' two can live pretty near as cheap as one if they pull together. You look awful good to me, lady. Will yuh take a chance, an' marry me?'

"We was sittin' on a little grassy place lookin' out over the lake. An' she stares at the water for a long time—till I begin to get scared I've offended her.

"'Will yuh, Mary?' I says. An' she turns them big brown eyes on me—all wet an' shiny—an'—an'——"

Bill stopped, and fumbled with his tobacco sack.

"An' there yuh are," he chuckled. "Just like that. We're goin' to be married. What d'yuh think? Spit it outa yuh, instead uh sittin' there gogglin' your eyes that way."

"I think you're some speedy," Luke observed, with justifiable astonishment. "That's swift work, all right, all right!"

"Well, what's the use uh figurin' around till you're gray-headed?" Bill argued placidly. "When yuh make up your mind to do a thing, why, do it, I say."

Luke did not attempt to refute that statement.

"Me an' hers both strays, as yuh might say," Bill went on. "I argued what was the use uh waitin'. A feller an' a girl don't never know much about each other till they've lived together, anyway. I said we'd get married right off the reel, get us a little place to live, an' I'd get me a job. An' seein' I'd kinda took her breath away, she agreed. So we got us a newspaper, an' started lookin' up rooms for rent. She's wise to Seattle, an' it don't take her long to spot a place right out close to the lake, where rent's cheap—two rooms furnished. We go size it up, an' it looks

good to us, so I plank down a month's rent. She says she can go on workin', too, but I sit hard on that idea.

"'You run the house,' says I. 'I'll guarantee to keep the grub box stocked an' the rent paid.'

"Well, we get back downtown, an' she takes me around on Pike Street, to show me where she lives, so I can find her to-night. We happen to drift past a big livery barn. I get a hunch to tackle it for a job. So we go into the office, and finds the head mogul smokin' a cigar, with his feet on a desk. I go after him. When he finds out I'm a sure-enough stockman from the range, he allows he can use me. I'm to start day after to-morrow—at sixty-five a month. Pretty good, eh?

"So everything's fixed," Bill concluded. "I got the license, an' a preacher located. We're goin' to his house, an' be married at eight o'clock. I want yuh to come along for a witness, Luke."

Luke stared at his friend. To him, Bill had never exhibited any indication of such capacity for action—or feeling. Yet he could not deny that some potent force had transformed Bill Smith. A sturdier quality of manhood seemed to have invested him. But the transformation rather took Luke's breath. Last night a light-hearted rioter, to-day chucking his heedless, careless, irresponsible past into the discard, and soberly dedicating himself to a wife and a home. And the plain, rather florid face of him shone with the firm conviction that he was doing the right thing, getting, as he would have put it, a strangle hold on happiness.

"I sure will," Luke replied. "And I wish you both luck to beat the band!"

They shook hands.

Bill looked at his watch.

"Have you eat yet?" he asked.

Luke shook his head.

"Don't, then," Bill admonished. "It's about a twenty-five-minute ride out to our new home, by gum! Mary had a groceryman take over some stuff. We'll go out after—after we do business with the parson—and have supper there, eh?"

"Uh-uh!" A gleam of wisdom came to Luke. "I've seen a weddin' or two, Bill. Lemme tell you somethin'. When folks get married—especially a woman—they don't want no third party hangin' around afterward. I'll see you and the little girl through the ceremony. Then you two take the preacher's blessin' and beat it home. I'll see you to-morrow."

"Well, all right," Bill grinned. "You better eat now, then, and we'll go around and get Mary."

So the pair of them set forth. Bill refused to eat. He was going to eat supper with his wife," he said. And Luke, understanding the sentiment, and wondering, withal, where and how Bill Smith had managed to conceal this considerate, domestic side of him, did not urge him.

The meal over, and the clock hands drawing past seven, the two hurried up to Pike Street. There, at a certain number, Bill left Luke standing outside and stepped into a dimlit hallway. But he turned back, and, gripping Luke's arm, stared anxiously into his face.

"Say, old-timer," he whispered tensely. "Don't make no breaks about me, will yuh? About me bein' a hell tooter an' a wild one, an' all that. I have been kinda free with whisky an' poker games an' such. But I'm through, honest to God! She thinks I'm a real man, an' I got to live up to that. You won't forget, an' start joshin' her, makin' out that I'm a regular old he-wolf, will yuh? She wouldn't sabe that kind of a joke."

"Go on with you! Of course I won't!" Luke laughed at Bill Smith's exceeding earnestness. "You're all right, Bill, and I know it. Go and get your girl."

Bill disappeared up the stairs. In less than five minutes he was back, a

bulging canvas grip in one hand, the girl beside him.

"Mary, this here's Luke Freeman, a blamed good friend uh mine," said Bill. "Miss Harris, Luke."

She murmured some brief acknowledgment, a shy, quiet, little thing, dressed in neat and sober gray. They turned up the street. Luke fell in behind. In the none too strong light of the street lamps he got only an impression of her face, but what he saw was pleasing. And she kept a hand on Bill's arm, as if she had the utmost trust and confidence in her choice. Luke followed them, marveling. Romance, recognizable as such, had seldom come his way. But this he knew was the real thing. He looked back at his own part in last night's play, and wondered what Bill Smith would have done. But that was just something that happened, he considered, an incidental clash. This, this was different. These two were embarking on the greatest adventure of all; taking the big chance. Luke found it in his heart to envy them.

In due time they reached a small house beside a drab old church, and were ushered into a parlor. There the minister, a kindly-mannered, gray-haired man, soon joined them. Bill produced his license. The minister called his wife as an additional witness. And so, in due form, but without formality, they two were made one.

When the last word had been said the old gentleman cast off his ceremonial tone, and wished them a long life of much happiness. The girl—and Luke perceived the aptness of Bill's statement that her eyes were "big an' brown an' shiny"—stood, shy and silent, smiling a little. And then, without any other warning than a brief quiver of her lips, she turned and buried her face against Bill Smith's broad chest and began to cry.

"There, there, honey," Bill soothed anxiously. "Yuh don't want to take on."

She looked up, smiling through her tears.

"I'm sure I don't know why I should cry," she said naïvely. "I never had more reason to keep from cryin'."

"That's a woman's privilege at such times, my dear," the minister's wife assured her.

Presently they were in the street again, Bill jokingly talkative, his wife quiet, but smiling at his jests. And on the corner, where a car line ran, Luke took leave of them.

"Now, yuh sure want to come out an' see us to-morrow," Bill insisted, and his wife seconded the invitation softly. "I'll go back with you an' pack out what stuff I got in that room."

"All right, folks, I will," Luke agreed. "And you got my best wishes, and don't you forget it! So long! Good night!"

Feeling suddenly friendless and alone, he swung away along the street, down Pike, and along Third Avenue to Cherry, and as he walked his fingers closed fast over that gold locket, and the face within, with its tantalizing smile, seemed to rise up and mock him.

CHAPTER V.

THE LADY OF THE LOCKET.

When sunrise rolled around once more, and Luke had fortified himself with hot cakes and coffee, the world looked brighter—albeit he was still the victim of indecision. That is to say, he could not positively make up his mind to deliberately pursue further adventure in the city of Seattle. At the same time he had a very clear-cut purpose in his mind when he added the black hat and tan shoes to his personal attire, and he had not yet disavowed that purpose. Somebody else might mistake him for this man Graves, and

thereby shed some light on the tangle which puzzled Luke more than he openly admitted. It did not occur to him that as a result of his summary squelching of the policeman there might be a decided backfire. As a matter of fact, his every action had been more or less taken on the spur of the moment.

Now, with a good breakfast under his belt, and a sunny day before him, he found himself at some little loss. Bill Smith was disposed of for good. If he, Luke, were to hit the back trail he would do it alone. And if he were going to do that, why delay?

But thinking of Bill Smith started Luke on a different tack.

"I suppose," he reflected, "it'd be a good scheme for me to get them folks some little thing for a weddin' present. Bill was too blame sudden for me last night, but it isn't too late yet."

Wherefore, he strolled up Second Avenue, eying critically the shop windows, cudgeling his brain to think of something decent, useful, and not too expensive. He could hit on nothing suitable. Plain horse sense told him that the conventional silver spoons or such articles were hardly the thing for Mr. and Mrs. Bill Smith. But what?

Eventually he garnered a suggestion from a canvas sign prominently displayed on a store front over the way, advertising a sale in linen. Be it observed that Luke was not wholly unfamiliar with the niceties of living. His more or less limited experience embraced the fact that most housewives set a great store by table linen. He judged Mary Smith to be no exception. A couple of tableclothes, and some napkins. The problem was solved. Luke crossed the street and entered the store diffidently, for the place was thick-sprinkled with female shoppers. A thin, bald-headed individual, garbed like an undertaker, and of as solemn a countenance, bent an interrogative eye upon Luke as he cast an uncertain glance down the aisles.

"Something, sir?"

"Where's these tablecloths and things you're advertisin'?" Luke made known his wants.

"Yes, sir. Third floor. Elevator on your left, sir."

There was an elevator, right enough. Also about fourteen women, all trying to enter it at once. Luke climbed the stairs.

Thus it came about that on the next floor he found himself in a department given over to gloves, ribbons, women's wear, and what not. And behind a counter, less than twenty feet away, his roving gaze fell upon a fair-haired young woman whose face happened to be turned his way. Luke had a rare memory for faces. Moreover, that particular face had been haunting him for twenty-four hours. There was no chance for a mistake—unless, like himself, the lady of the locket was afflicted with a double. Or—— But the girl recognized him. He knew it. Not by any definite, open sign. Her countenance did not change. At least, no change which would have been perceptible to a casual onlooker. But Luke's was the keen vision of an eagle, and he marked the faint color come and go, and the slight dilation of her nostrils.

He took a step or two toward her. She did not flinch. Neither did she evince the slightest degree of interest. Indeed, she seemed to view him with marvelous impassivity, impersonally, as one would gaze on something inanimate—a tree, a landscape, or a far stretch of water. Luke's heart sank. He simply could not walk up to that cool, young person and begin a conversation impromptu. If she had reasons of her own for passing him up, why, that settled it. He was not going to force himself on her, that was a certainty. So Luke, in a mental whirl, grievously hurt, puzzled, and verging

upon anger, turned away. He remembered that he had come there to purchase table linen for a gift.

By the merest chance his gaze swept across a mirror hanging to the wall beside the stairs. From its polished surface a substantial area of the store was reflected. But what arrested Luke was the sudden change in the girl's expression. She was staring after him, and he could have sworn that she looked pensive, disappointed. Luke swung about, trying to catch that expression in the flesh. She was too quick for him, however. He encountered the same impersonal front.

But he was a resourceful young man. He had an idea. Plunging one hand in his pocket, he advanced boldly upon her counter. When only the narrow, glass-topped case separated them, Luke drew forth the locket, and, holding it out in the palm of his hand, said in a discreetly lowered tone:

"Isn't *that* your property, miss?"

The girl looked at him, at the locket, then met his gaze squarely. She shook her head.

"No," she said.

"Well, I'll be——" Luke bit off the rash exclamation. He was now more than disappointed—he was irritated close to wrath. And he sprang the case open and turned the girl's own face accusingly upon herself.

At the action a little humorous twist drew the girl's mouth out of its impersonal set. She put her hand quickly over the locket in his palm, and leaned a little toward him.

"Oh, no," she murmured. "Not now. It's yours."

"Thank yuh," Luke said dryly. His tone was not one of extreme pleasure, but he transferred the locket to its resting place in his pocket before she should change her mind. Then they looked at each other and smiled.

"What's the joke?" Luke inquired lightly. "Say, there's a lot of things I'd like to ask you——"

"But you can't—not here," she interrupted. "I'm working, don't you see? The floorwalker would be down on me directly."

"Well, I'm not goin' to lose track of you so easy again," Luke declared positively. "There's one or two——"

"You really shouldn't stand here talking to me," she reminded him, "unless you are buying something."

Luke surveyed the counter. All sorts of feminine knickknacks were displayed there, but nothing he could possibly use.

"You might sell me a nickel's worth uh pins," he hazarded.

The girl chuckled, a throaty gurgle of amusement. She was busy penciling something on a bit of paper.

"Don't be absurd," she said. "Here. Come at seven this evening. If I am not on the steps, ring, and ask for me—Dorothy Fair."

She slid the bit of paper across the glass case. Luke's bandaged hand engulfed it. It was on the tip of his tongue to tell her that the name would be more appropriate if reversed. But this he decided to withhold for some future occasion when he knew her better.

"Good-by, Mr.——" she said pointedly and interrogatively.

"I'll tell you who I am to-night," Luke returned teasingly. "There's one or two people in this burg seem to think my name is Graves."

This random shot caught her. A suddenly anxious look clouded her face.

"Has any one—any one else mistaken you for Bob?" she asked sharply.

"I'll tell you to-night," Luke replied.

He was not without guile, and he remembered how near she had come to driving him away. Likewise he was, all of a sudden, in that blithesome humor which builds a mystery where none exists, out of sheer playfulness of spirit.

He walked away, casting a reassuring smile over his shoulder as he set foot on the stairs that led to the floor above—and to table linen. Going up, he looked again at the address she had given him—970 Madison. He knew that street.

A matter of half an hour later Luke turned into the lower part of Cherry Street, a flat bundle tucked under his arm. As he crossed from one corner to another some one tapped him on the arm, and turning, he found himself face to face with a bluecoat. The officer's fingers closed tightly on his arm.

"You're under arrest. Don't make any fuss, or it won't be healthy for you," he warned.

"Do you see me makin' any fuss?" Luke retorted. "What's this for, anyway?"

"I guess you know as well as I do," the officer grumbled.

He ran his hand deftly over Luke—and that young man thanked his stars for the impulse that had caused him to leave his six-shooter in the room when he set out that morning. He was only too well aware of the penalty for carrying concealed weapons within city limits. Sometimes he trifled with this ordinance when he wandered in a strange town at night. But, fortunately, he had discarded the gun that morning.

"No Gat, huh?" said the policeman. He seemed a trifle surprised. "Hey!" He waved across the street. "Come on over here."

And, not greatly to Luke's surprise, who should walk over the way but the black-mustached man who had started the riotous proceedings in the King Street district. But he kept a discreet distance from Luke. His face was not without the scars of conflict.

"You sure this is the guy?" demanded the officer.

"Course it's him," the other declared. "You watch him, too. He's dead tough."

"All right," the bluecoat returned. "Walk along in front of me, you."

"Well, say, would you mind tellin' me what I'm pulled for, an' where you figure on walkin' me to?" Luke insisted. "I don't aim to start any argument, but a man's got a right to know what he's up against."

"You'll find out when you get to the station," the officer responded curtly. "Meantime, you hike! See?"

Luke saw clearly enough, or thought he did, although he had no intention of admitting anything of the sort. Also he understood the necessity of obeying, and so turned his steps as directed.

In due time he arrived at the police station, and was entered on the blotter as Robert Graves, charged with assault, resisting an officer, and shooting with intent to kill. To the first and last accusations the name of Andrew Blake was set down as complaining witness. Blake, then, was the name of the black-mustached man. Luke was glad to know that. He promised himself silently to cultivate Mr. Blake's acquaintance when he should regain his freedom.

He opened his mouth to protest at having another man's name fastened upon him, but thought better of that. The name made little difference, since he had really committed the offenses as charged. One name was as good as another for the present. He was searched then, his possessions catalogued, and a receipt issued him for the same. And with that he was hustled off to a cell.

There he sat down to indulge in some unpleasant cogitation. He had no particular fear of the outcome—he had defended himself, at first, and later both himself and the girl. He hated the idea of dragging her into it, but so far as he could see there was no other way. If it were unpleasant for her to appear in court as a witness, it was vastly more unpleasant for him to lie a prisoner in jail. How he was going to manage the

task of clearing himself otherwise, Luke could not make out. He concluded that the first and best thing was to consult a lawyer. Making this want known to a jail attendant, who passed along that corridor, he was gruffly informed that he could get a lawyer when he went before the judge.

"Yes, but when's that going to be?" he desired to know.

"When you get there," was all the response this elicited.

With that he had to be content—though the police method and style of speech made him yearn to plant his fist on the jaws of a few more to teach them better manners.

Late in the afternoon food that Luke turned up his nose at was served to him. Shortly after that, in the neighborhood of five o'clock, to be exact, he had a caller.

CHAPTER VI.

TEMPORARILY GRAVES.

He was a rubicund, genial person, bearing the hall marks of prosperity, from the properly tailored suit on his back to his double chin and superabundance of adipose tissue. Luke surveyed him impersonally as the turnkey unlocked the cell door. Who he was, or what he wanted, Luke had not the least idea—but he welcomed anything to vary the monotony of sitting in a steel box and wondering how he should get out. The turnkey opened the door and departed. The plump-bodied gentleman, who had cast a keen glance of appraisal on Luke, came to the point at once.

"How-d'-do?" said he, and handed Luke a bit of pasteboard which conveyed the information that the bearer was one H. B. Kenworthy, attorney at law.

"Uh-huh!" Luke grunted. "Might say I'm glad to meet yuh, Mr. Kenworthy, but I don't know whether I am or not, under the circumstances."

The legal man chuckled.

"Aha! Humorous point of view, even in adversity," he observed. "Proper spirit in which to accept chances of fortune, young man. Well? I'm supposed to get you out of here, Mr.—er—Graves."

"You are, eh?" Luke returned, in justifiable surprise. "Who give you the high sign to rescue me? How are you goin' to get me out? An' why, by Jiminy? I'd like to know that."

"Well, you see, Mr.—ah—Graves, there are certain—ah—reasons——"

"I'm afraid you've treed the wrong coon," Luke interrupted. "I'm dead anxious to have a lawyer get busy for me—but I ain't Graves, darn him! Not by a long shot!"

"Ssh!" Kenworthy warned. "That's all right. You won't get in any worse by being Bob Graves—er—temporarily. Know Miss Dorothy Fair?"

"I've met her," Luke admitted.

"So I understand." Kenworthy's eyes twinkled. "Wouldn't be here if you hadn't, eh? Would you mind obliging her?"

"Not a bit," Luke owned.

"Very well," Kenworthy pursued. "Continue to be Graves. For the reason thereof I shall refer you to Miss Fair herself, this evening."

"That sounds good to me," Luke observed. "But I'll be hanged if I see how you're goin' to manage it!"

"Leave it to me," Kenworthy replied confidently. "It's a trifle late for court proceedings, but they can always stretch a point. I arranged for that before I came here. I haven't practiced law in Seattle ten years for nothing. Come along with me."

Luke followed him to the office. There they were joined by a plain-clothes man, and the three ascended to another floor, where a heavy-jowled person presided behind a raised desk. A middle-aged man, of the prosperous Kenworthy type, sitting on one side,

rose, and waddled up to the lawyer and his client. Kenworthy performed an introduction: "Mr. Graves, Mr. Purcell."

Subsequent proceedings were brief and businesslike, although wholly foreign to Luke's conception of court procedure. The magistrate read the complaint, Luke pleaded not guilty, and Kenworthy, as his counsel, waived further hearing—a deputy from the district attorney's office taking cognizance. Then Luke was bound over to the district court, with bail fixed at five thousand dollars. Purcell and Kenworthy jointly signed certain documents. And Luke was free.

"Night, Graves, Kenworthy," Purcell grunted. "Got t' get home t' dinner."

He departed briskly.

"Now, Mr. Graves," said Kenworthy, "when you get your personal belongings from the station clerk we'll be on our way, too."

"Sufferin' Jemima!" Luke murmured, as they descended the stairs. "That was quick work. You and that Purcell party went bail for me five thousand dollars, eh? I don't know why you're doin' it, but it's mighty white of you."

"You'll find out why before very long," Kenworthy replied. "I may as well say candidly that I'm not taking chances of you jumping your bond out of pure consideration for you personally—though you don't look to me like a man who *would* jump a bond. You may get a chance to return the favor."

"If I do," Luke responded emphatically, "I'll be there with both feet."

"Well, we'll see," Kenworthy rejoined guardedly.

At the office, Luke received his money, watch, and other personal trifles, including the parcel destined to adorn the humble dining table of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Smith, and the two of them passed into the street. A hack stood by the curb. Kenworthy looked at his watch.

"I imagine," said he, "that you were not served with particularly appetizing food during your—ah—enforced sojourn in our local bastile."

"Not what you could notice," Luke returned. "Dog feed, I'd call it."

"Have dinner with me," Kenworthy invited. "Then we'll get down to business."

"All right," Luke agreed. Both propositions were entirely acceptable to him, for he was quite as thirsty for information as he was hungered for food.

"Pile in, then, Mr. Temporary Graves," the lawyer said whimsically, indicating the hack.

Ten minutes later they drew up at a café, and, once within, a waiter bowed them to a table, and Kenworthy waved aside the proffered menu.

"Broiled tenderloin, French fried, a bit of potato salad—and black coffee," said he. "How about you, Graves?"

"That sounds good to me," said Luke. "Let it go double."

"A quart of Budweiser, first," Kenworthy continued. "And listen here. Hurry that steak order. We're not dining. We want to eat."

The waiter hurried about his business. Kenworthy rose and sought a telephone booth in one corner. When he issued from that their beer was served. While they waited for their food, and during the meal, Kenworthy found time to draw Luke out with adroitly put remarks—a matter easily accomplished, since Luke had nothing behind him to gloss over or conceal, and was by nature as open as broad noonday. So that by the time they were whirring up an elevator to Kenworthy's office the lawyer knew more about Luke than Luke himself guessed.

He was ushered into a comfortably appointed anteroom. Kenworthy bade him take a seat. He, himself, disappeared into an adjoining room. From thence, at intervals, for twenty minutes thereafter, Luke heard a faintly audible murmur of voices. He smoked a ciga-

rette or two, and finally buried his nose between the pages of a magazine. From which preoccupation he was presently aroused by a voice at his elbow: "Good evening, Mr. Freeman."

Dorothy Fair had come in, unheard. Luke rose to his feet.

"I beg your pardon," said he. "I'm not hard of hearin' as a general thing. Honest, you must 'a' come in on tiptoe. But I'm mighty glad to see you."

Miss Fair took a seat.

"I wish I could believe you were sincere," she smiled. "Doesn't it seem to you that seeing me sort of brings unpleasant things your way?"

"Oh, I don't know," Luke responded. "They might be comin' anyway. And then, again, there wouldn't be any sense in me blamin' you for what's happened. Say, did *you* have this lawyer get busy on my account?"

"Yes," she answered directly. "I saw the report of your arrest in an afternoon paper."

"How'd you know it was me?" he demanded. "I wasn't arrested under my own name."

"I guessed it would be you," she replied soberly. "Or else——"

"It must be this other fellow that is my twin for looks," Luke finished the sentence for her. "I'll begin to think I am this Bob Graves pretty soon, if I don't get on to the real lay of the land. Seems like everybody insists on dealin' me his hand this last forty-eight hours. And I don't like to hold cards in a game I don't sabe. Where does this Graves come in on the play?"

"He's my brother," she enlightened tersely.

"Oh!" said Luke.

Then, after a second: "And your name's Fair?"

"Half brother, I should have said," she amended.

"I see," Luke murmured.

"You could pass for him anywhere," she went on, leaning forward a little, and scanning his face intently. "Except among people who knew him intimately. I never saw a more remarkable likeness."

"I've managed it all right with about three men that I know of," Luke agreed dryly. "They appeared to be dead sure who I was. And they didn't seem to like me much, if you noticed."

"No," she responded quickly. "They didn't—the—the thugs! There was more than mere dislike behind that, though. Do you know anything about mines and mining, Mr. Freeman?"

"A little. I've prospected for placer—and quartz, too. Worked one winter in free-millin' ore in Colorado," Luke replied. "Why?"

"You'll understand, then," Miss Fair said, with what seemed to Luke a sigh of relief. "I'm going to tell you a rather remarkable story. And I'm going to make a pretty nervy request before I'm through."

"Fire away," Luke encouraged. "I'm all ears."

"You know Montana—the Little Rockies? Mr. Kenworthy said you did?" she asked first.

"I surely do," Luke smiled. "It's my stampin' ground, Montana is. I was less'n fifty miles from the Little Rockies a week ago."

"Ah! That's better still! Well, then," she began, "first, Bob, my brother, has been prospecting in the Little Rockies off and on for five or six seasons. About three years ago he struck what looked like a good lead, and staked it. He did his assessment work that season, and the next. Last year four more claims were staked—two on each side. The man who did the staking was named Blake."

"Uh-huh! Him with the black mustache?" Luke nodded. "I'm gettin' it. Go ahead."

"The other two came later, I understand," Miss Fair continued. "I don't know their names, but I think they

were those two who tried to stop you in the hall—I'm just guessing at that, but I can't account for their actions any other way. Anyhow, Bob did his assessment work last year all right, and opened up a small vein that assayed quite high.

"At the same time these other men were driving a hole in on each side of him. Supposedly they were all cutting in on the same lead, or ledge, or whatever you call it. When Bob got the required amount of work done to hold the claim he quit work and started out to get some one with money interested in it. These other men, it seems, stayed right on the job driving their tunnels. That was last summer.

"Did you ever have plenty of money, Mr. Freeman?" She broke away from the thread of her narrative suddenly.

Luke shook his head.

"It's bad for some people," she said slowly. "We used to have plenty—our people. It made a mess of Bob. It doesn't sound nice for me to say. He's my brother. But I'm trying to give you facts. Money slips through Bob's fingers like sand. He's a drunkard. A periodic. For weeks, months, he won't touch liquor, then he lives on it for days at a time. Everything else goes by the board when he has one of those spells."

Luke nodded.

"I've seen men like that," said he. "They can't help it."

"Perhaps not," she sighed. Her gaze was turned critically on Luke.

"Do you know," she said abruptly, "that you're dressed exactly as Bob was when I saw him last?"

"I guess I am," Luke grinned. "I ought to be. I copied him—just to see what would happen next. That was before I ran across you in that store."

"You copied him?" she echoed.

"I saw him," Luke explained. "Down on a street close to the depot, yesterday morning, standin' in front of a saloon. I sized him up for a minute, and then I started across to talk to this feller that had the nerve to look so much like me. He piked into the saloon. I went in after him. But he got away from me, somehow. I didn't see him again."

"I've been trying to find him for a week," she said slowly. "If you'd just known—if I'd just told you the other night, instead of——"

She stopped, and Luke saw a pink flush steal up into her cheeks.

"Anyway," she continued hurriedly, "I had a little money from dad's estate. Bob had long since gone through his share. So I let him have mine, on the strength of this good prospect. Bob isn't a fool. He knows quartz mining like a book. And he always seems on the point of mastering his weaknesses. But instead of going back, and using the few hundred I gave him in development work, he kept trying to get some one with capital to take it up—and, of course, it was only a matter of time till he was broke again, and nothing accomplished.

"With his money incapacity it was a terrible effort for him to keep anything or make anything in a city. This spring he didn't have enough to pay his way back to the mine, let alone get supplies enough out there to keep him while he worked. So he put it off as long as he could within the law.

"You know the mining laws—a hundred dollars' worth of development work in a twelvemonth to hold a claim?"

Luke nodded comprehension. The girl brushed back impatiently a lock of tawny hair that strayed down across her face.

"The time's up ten days from now," she said quietly. "After that the claim is open to relocation by any one. And it's four days by train and wagon to the mine."

Luke whistled.

"Pardon *me!*" he said. "Go on."

"Meantime," she went on, and her voice quickened, hardened a little, "these other men burrowed like ants. They must have had an idea away last summer. At any rate, they worked all winter. About three weeks ago one of them came to Seattle. Bob met him, or saw him on the street. I don't know the man myself. I never saw him till the other night—you remember?"

Luke glanced ruefully at his bandaged metacarpals.

"I didn't even have the faintest idea who he was until after those others took you for Bob in that hallway. Then I began to understand. None of them knew me, I'm sure. Blake, I'm positive, hadn't the least notion I was Bob Graves' sister. But it was a chance to get Bob—as they thought—in a position where they could beat him up or do something that would absolutely prevent him from getting back and doing that assessment work before it was too late.

"You see, shortly after Blake came here—and now I can guess he came to keep track of Bob—my brother got a letter from a man in Harlem who knew him well. He, quite by accident, had found out what was in the wind, and he wrote Bob advising him by all means to get back and do his work, if he wanted to hold a claim that was going to be worth big money. These others had struck rich rock. That wasn't all.

"I don't suppose you've ever gone into the mining laws at all thoroughly?" she observed.

"Well, no. I know 'em in a general way, that's all," Luke admitted.

"There's a queer law, or it may be a court ruling of the law, which provides that where a vein has its apex in a claim, the owner of that claim has a right to follow the vein and extract the ore, regardless of where it leads underground."

A gleam of light began to illuminate the problem for Luke.

"An' the apex—the top end, huh?—uh this vein is on your brother's claim," he speculated. "And those other jaspers find it out, and figure they got to have this claim, or theirs is no good—because he'll come right along that vein onto their ground and take out the ore. Is that it?"

"Exactly," she said.

"Well?" Luke encouraged.

"Well!" she echoed. "It's anything but well. When that letter came there was only one thing to be done. Bob had to get there and protect his interests. And he didn't have the money. He'd trifled it all away, the few hundred I'd let him have. So in desperation we went to Mr. Kenworthy. He's an old and intimate friend of my mother's. Mr. Kenworthy—largely because I made a personal appeal to him, I think—financed Bob. He drew his check for a thousand dollars. Bob cashed it. The next day—the day he was to have started—he disappeared. I've traced him to twenty different saloons, but never caught him. I was trying to get track of him down in that place where—where——"

Her voice wavered a little, and she stopped. Luke stared at her, his brows puckered in thought.

"Them fellers is lookin' for him, too," he summed up. "They took me for him in that house the other night, and thought it was a right good chance to fix Mr. Bob Graves so he wouldn't do any assessment work for a while. But they're still at sea. Eh? Because if they'd got track uh Graves an' knew I was only an imitation, they wouldn't 'a' gone to the trouble uh havin' me pinched to-day. They figured that court trouble would hold Graves till the time was up—and they could relocate his claim. Uh-huh! I see."

Evidently there was something else that Luke had determined to see, by the concentration of his stare on the toe of one tan shoe and the corrugations

that gathered on his normally smooth forehead.

"There ain't much time to sit around and talk about it," he said finally. "It's somebody's move—quick! What's the matter with me impersonatin' your brother a while longer—long enough to get there and do that assessment work in his name?"

"Will you?" Dorothy laid her hand impulsively on his knee and her eyes gleamed. "*Will* you?"

"It's a big order," Luke murmured. "A mighty big order. A thousand miles by train an' wagon, and ten feet through solid rock. I don't know if I can make it. But I'm dead willin' to try."

Miss Fair smiled at him, not coquettishly through the veil of her lashes, but openly; even admiringly, and with a contagious fellowship that would speedily have led Luke into making more rash promises, if she had not desisted. But she turned her head to call:

"Mr. Kenworthy!"

The portly attorney appeared in the doorway, looking inquiringly over the top of his glasses.

"Mr. Freeman," the girl smiled, "has just proposed to do the very thing I was hesitating to ask him to undertake."

"Mr. Freeman, then," Kenworthy observed, "is evidently a young man who believes in action."

"I certainly do," Luke assured him, "in a case uh this kind."

Kenworthy beckoned them into his inner sanctum. He waved Luke to a chair and then faced him across a table.

"Can you make it in the time?" he asked crisply.

"If I can grab two drillers between here and Harlem, get three saddle horses and one pack, an' don't get held up on the way, I can do it," Luke asserted.

"It'll be expensive, eh?" Kenworthy fired at him.

Luke shook his head.

"Uh-huh! I got transportation back there. I know a feller in Harlem'll let me have anything I want, an' take his pay when I get around to paying. Shouldn't cost much. I'll send you an expense account an' you can square it up when you get ready."

Kenworthy chewed on the tip of a pencil for a minute, bending a pursed-lip gaze on Luke. Then he produced a fat bill fold and began sliding out twenty-dollar notes.

"There's five hundred," he said at length, pushing the money across to Luke. "You may run into trouble."

"I don't need half uh that," said Luke. "But, anyway, I'll give you a receipt—an' whatever's left when I get through."

"You've got it. That's receipt enough for me," Kenworthy rumbled. "I'd rather hand a man like you the bank roll on your say-so, than lend on a chattel mortgage to some people. You've made a hit with me, young fellow."

"Glad to hear it." Luke grinned cheerfully. "Might want to borrow some time when I need it."

He stowed the money in his pocket. Suddenly a recollection filled him with consternation.

"Say, by Jiminy!" he complained. "I'm all tangled up in your blamed court. How about that? D'yuh want me to jump m' bail, Kenworthy?"

Mr. Kenworthy waved a fat hand airily.

"Don't let that worry you, Mr. Temporary Graves," said he. "Between you and me and the young lady, if I want to I can have that case of yours continued from now till kingdom come."

CHAPTER VII.

HITTING THE TRAIL.

Luke grinned.

"You're a wonder at your own game, aren't you?" he said. "If you're dead sure of that, I'll be on the way as soon

as I can get going. Have you got the location of this minin' claim?" he asked, turning to the girl. "I mean, can you tell me exactly where it is in the mountains? The Little Rockies is a big country. I'll be blamed short uh time to hunt around blind."

"Oh, yes!" said she. "It's on the north fork of Beauharnis Creek, about two miles above what's called Horse-thief Crossing."

"Good!" said Luke. "I know right where it is. Went on a huntin' trip in there one time."

"I've got the staking record, and the assessment certificates, too," she remarked. "You'll need those—if Bob doesn't turn up."

"Better let me have 'em, anyway," he observed. "Then there'll be no chance for a slip. I can get the work done, an' put it on record, an' that'll settle it."

Kenworthy hauled forth his watch.

"Well, young people," said he, "this matter is definitely settled, so far as I can see. I have an engagement at eight-thirty."

Luke and the girl rose.

"You'll have to come with me and get those papers," she said. "I didn't have time to go out and get them."

Kenworthy shook hands with them at the door.

"Good luck to you, Mr.—er—Graves," he drawled. "Don't let the opposing forces put a spoke in your wheel. They may try, you know. Keep an eye open. Drop me a line when you find time. I'll notify you when you'll have to appear. As a matter of fact I don't think that case will ever be called to trial. But if it should, you'll have to appear in order to protect your bondsmen. Good luck to you!"

They shot down the elevator.

"We take a Madison Street car," Miss Fair murmured when they reached the sidewalk.

A few minutes saw them aboard a car that crawled toilsomely up the face of a steep hill, with sundry groans and squeaks and a vibrant whirring of cable in the slot below. Under cover of the noise, the girl leaned and spoke to Luke.

"I wonder if Blake and those men would try to stop you from doing the work, thinking that you *are* Bob Graves? Suppose they should find out, and follow you?"

There was an anxious note in her voice.

"If they do," Luke replied carelessly, "they'll find Montana's a heap different from Seattle. There'll be no policemen to help 'em out there. If they bother that claim before the last minute of the last day the law allows they lay themselves wide open."

"I know," she sighed. "But you never can tell what men will do when there's anything valuable at stake. I'm beginning to get conscience-stricken when I think of what might happen. I shouldn't have got you into this at all. It's pretty selfish of me to ask a stranger to run risks like that to pull my chestnuts out of the fire."

"Forget it!" Luke advised cheerfully. "I'd rather pull chestnuts out of a fire for you than anybody I ever saw."

Miss Dorothy Fair turned her face to the window just then, so he could not tell in what spirit she received this declaration.

"Besides," he hastened to add, "you want to remember them fellers gave *me* a pretty rough deal the other night—and I'm no Christian. When a man hits me, I'm goin' to hit back, an' a darned sight harder, if I can. An' it isn't costin' me anything to do this little job for you. Look at the wad old Kenworthy handed me? I ain't had so much money at once since one time I cleaned a big poker game in Sheridan, Wyoming."

"Do you gamble much?" the girl asked curiously.

"I don't know what you'd call much," Luke answered dryly. "Did you ever see a cow-puncher that didn't play poker?"

"And drink whisky," she supplemented.

"Most of us," Luke admitted.

"Do you?" she asked point-blank.

"Yes," he said slowly. "And I guess if you'd swallowed as much dust an' alkali water as I have, an' every man that follows the range for a livin', you'd drink whisky once in a while for a change. Whisky never made me fall down on a job I'd undertook, that I remember. But that's neither here nor there. You want this work done. I'm goin' to get it done."

"I believe you will," she answered soberly. "I hope you will—for a perfectly selfish reason, I'm sorry to say. I'm getting awful weary of the way I've had to live lately. I don't think you, who have always known the comparative independence of the range country, can quite realize what it means to work ten hours a day, twelve and fifteen hours on Saturdays, for eight dollars a week—and pinch and scrape to make ends meet and preserve your self-respect. If this *should* fail—well, I don't know. One can always manage somehow. But I'd want to sink into the ground. I've got Mr. Kenworthy into it. He has advanced first to Bob and now to you fifteen hundred dollars. How could I ever pay it back?"

"You won't have to. And he wouldn't expect it of you, anyhow. He's takin' a chance, with his eyes open," Luke declared.

"Perhaps not, because he has only done it out of friendship for me," she said. "But don't you see how I'd *feel?* He doesn't even know that I'm compelled to hang like grim death to that store position. He doesn't know I let Bob have the few hundred dollars dad left me. In fact, he specifically advised me to keep that strictly in my own hands."

"Aw, well, shucks!" Luke encouraged. "If that claim's good enough for these fellers to be so dead set on gettin' it, it's worth enough to put you on Easy Street. So don't worry."

Miss Fair signaled the conductor to stop, just then. But Luke continued to voice his thoughts when they set foot on the walk.

"I suppose," he drawled, "when you get rich off that there apex I'm goin' to hold down, you won't know a feller like me at all, huh?"

In the glimmer of the street lamps, she looked up at him and laughed, a low-toned chuckle that sadly stirred Luke's pulses.

"That," she said amusedly, "is something only the future can tell."

They came to a halt before a square, three-story dwelling.

"Will you wait out here, Mr. Freeman?" she requested. "I room here, and the house isn't blessed with a parlor. My landlady would be utterly scandalized if I took you up."

"She must be a rotten-minded old party," Luke remarked frankly. "Sure I'd just as soon wait here."

Dorothy was back in a few minutes with a long envelope, which she handed to Luke. He stowed it carefully in an inside pocket. Miss Fair had stepped backward up the step, so that she stood a trifle above him, and so extended her hand.

"You'll let me know when you get to Harlem, will you?" she asked.

"I will," Luke promised. "Good night!"

"Good night!" she echoed.

He swung about on his heel. A dozen yards away, he glanced back. She was framed in the doorway, and as he looked over his shoulder he caught the white flash of her sleeve as she waved her hand. Then the door closed.

"She ain't mad at me for kissin' her

the other night," Luke mused, as he strode along. "But I notice she didn't give me a chance to make any such break to-night. Darn it! How am I ever goin' to get to know her, an' me chasin' off to Montana? Some fellers, now—look at Bill Smith!"

But Luke had acute enough perception to know that there was a considerable difference in type between Dorothy Fair and Bill Smith's apple-cheeked Mary—a difference which tended to make him soberly thoughtful. Still there was that matter of the locket. He had fought for her, would gladly fight for her again, with no particular idea of reward. Those things counted with a woman, Luke knew. So he had hope. And, being a normal young man, he waited for a car on the next corner without any sentimental lump in his throat. In fact, he looked forward with certain expectation to Blake and his "side kickers," as Luke termed them, putting in their oar when he struck the Little Rockies. In which case, Luke foresaw more or less excitement. To have some one he disliked attempt to interfere with him in the pursuit of his legitimate business was a situation Luke rather anticipated —since it would give him fair license for swift and effective reprisal. He deemed himself to have the very best of reasons for disliking Mr. Andrew Blake. A broken hand and a day in a stinking city jail irked Luke considerably, to say nothing of minor grievances.

He reached the downtown district, and went hurriedly about his business. First he learned at what hour he could catch an eastbound train. Finding that he had until well past midnight at his disposal, he got his saddle sacked and checked as baggage. Then he went up to the room on Cherry Street, tucked his gun inside the waistband of his trousers, packed his war bag, and, with the flat parcel of table linen under his arm, set out for Bill Smith's dwelling, to deliver his belated wedding gift, and say good-by.

CHAPTER VIII.

A VICTIM OF THIRST.

At midnight, Luke was pacing up and down before the grimy red depot, with its maze of trackage laying a deadly trap for the heedless between the station and the wharves. His bag was in a berth aboard the sleeper, but the train was not slated to leave for thirty minutes. Wherefore, Luke was impatient and restless. He tramped back and forth, until at length he espied a saloon front gleaming hospitably on the opposite side of a cross street, half a block distant. Luke was thirsty, and since saloons exist for the relief of the thirsty, he started for this place, where a harmless glass of beer could be purchased—thus serving the double purpose of wetting his throat and killing a few minutes of time.

He stepped in casually, with intent to fulfill this desire, and straightway found himself face to face—literally—with a complication he would gladly have avoided.

For in the mirror behind the bar the first thing his gaze encountered was the swarthy countenance of Blake—him of the black mustache and the police complaint. Blake stood back against the wall, sheltering himself, so to speak, behind a slot machine. His face showed plainly enough in the glass, but he was not looking toward it. And instinctively Luke made a single step backward—to get out unseen. He was not in the habit of backing up from anything or anybody, and he resented the necessity. His retreat was based solely on policy, and it was the reverse of precipitate. His eyes, as he did so, followed the direction of Blake's scowling, puzzled gaze—and he stopped short.

Once more he had encountered fea-

tures, figure, and dress which might have been his own. It took him less than one blink of his eyelids to decide what he should do. In fact, he felt that luck was at last playing right into his hands. Graves leaned one elbow on the bar, his black hat pushed back from an exceedingly flushed face, nodding foolishly over a glass of whisky. The gray-blue eyes, so like Freeman's own, were bloodshot, glazed, vacant in their expression. Luke walked down the bar to his double, so bringing himself within range of Blake's vision. The man's jaw dropped. He edged sidewise, dodged in behind a group of men. Perhaps the sight of two Bob Graves where only one was before proved too much for Mr. Blake. Indeed, he was not the only person smitten with astonishment. A bartender craned his neck and audibly murmured: "Holy smoke!"

But Luke paid no attention; or, rather, he seemed to pay no attention, when, as a matter of caution, he watched Blake out of the corner of one eye. So long as that gentleman kept his finger out of the pie, Luke was quite willing to ignore him. His business was with his double—a double in the last stages of intoxication. He put a hand on Graves' shoulder.

"Come on, old-timer," he said crisply. "We ought to be hittin' the trail."

Graves was too far gone to rightly see what manner of man addressed him, but the vernacular of the range stirred a dormant impulse in his alcohol-clouded brain.

"'S ri'," he nodded amiably. "Otto be hittin' trail, aw ri'."

"Come on, then. We're all ready." Luke struck while the iron was hot.

Graves lurched. Luke laid hold and steadied him to the door, keeping a weather eye out for Blake. But that worthy remained in the background. And, once through the doors, Luke locked arms with his man and hustled him across the street and down to the depot. Nor did he pause until he reached the steps of the tourist sleeper in which he had secured a lower berth. The porter stood by. Luke slipped a dollar into his dusky palm.

"Here," said Luke, "lend me a hand with m' friend. Same berth as me. An', say, get it made up right away, will yuh?"

Between them, they got Graves to a seat. Luke let him slump over in one corner on the cushions. In half a minute he was sunk in a stupor. Then Luke raced for the office and bought a ticket, reëntering the car, jubilant.

"I got that bunch faded to a whisper now, for sure!" he chuckled.

The magic of the greased palm transformed the seat into a berth within five minutes, while Luke supported his intoxicated companion across the aisle. Then he tumbled Graves in among the blankets, removed his shoes, and left him. He stood outside by the steps till the conductor cried "'board!" smoking a cigarette in peace, and idly wondering what the next move would be, or if Blake would throw up his hands and quit.

"Anyhow, they got to come into the open next time," he reflected. "An' I guess I can take an even break with anybody on m' own ground. Especially when this twin uh mine gets sober, an' finds out what's ahead of him."

But that last, it developed, was not so simple as it appeared to Luke. All the intoxication of which he had first-hand experience was the brief, hilarious, overnight kind, with headaching sobriety for breakfast. He had never seen a man saturate himself with liquor till the sobering process was a slow and grievous thing. He had seen men, pitiable objects, on the heels of a long debauch. He knew that some men craved whisky at such a time, as a man terribly athirst craves water for his burning throat. But he had never been called upon to cope with that phenom-

enon and its by-products of shattered nerves, disjointed mental processes, and sheer physical inability to think and act in logical sequence.

Graves slept, or, rather, lay comatose till dawn rose to meet the train reeling up the steep grade to the summit of the Cascade Range. Luke spent the night in the smoker. He was a hardy soul, but the saloon odor Graves exhaled, the stale-cigar smells, and the vile breath that came of a sadly abused stomach was a little too much for him.

With the first peep of day, he glanced into the berth. Graves was awake, peering stupidly about him. He turned a glassy stare on Luke.

"Hello! How'd yuh feel?" Luke inquired.

"I want a drink," Graves croaked. "A drink uh whisky."

"Sufferin' Jemima!" Luke remonstrated. "Don't you think it's time yuh jarred loose from the booze? You been drunk a week."

Graves stared straight up at the bottom of the upper berth. Luke noticed then that his hands were locked tight together, and as tremulous as the leaves of a quaking aspen in a summer wind.

"I'll be bughouse in half an hour if I don't get some whisky to steady me," he whispered. "I don't know who you are, but for God's sake get me a drink—just one little drink!"

He fumbled with one twitching hand in various pockets, and eventually brought forth a twenty-dollar gold piece. But Luke shook his head. He began to see that Graves was in a bad way.

"Keep your money, old boy," he said. "I'll get you a drink, if it's to be had."

"Aw right," Graves muttered. He put his hand over his mouth and closed his eyes, and Luke left him locked in that grim struggle to hang onto sanity.

"By Jiminy!" he mused, as he went in search of the porter; "that feller's in worse shape than anybody I ever saw. I'd hate for whisky to get me that way. I sure would! He'd make a dandy horrible example for some temperance lecturer right now."

Luke succeeded in his quest. The porter brought him four small bottles, in lieu of the pint he asked for, one man-size drink in each. And Graves fell upon one of those like a famished animal, draining it to the last drop.

At intervals, until breakfast was called, Luke doled out liquor. He tried to withhold it, but when Graves began to sweat and see things of fearsome shape coming into the berth at him, he gave in, lest he drive the man into full-fledged delirium tremens. Betweenwhiles, Luke tried to talk. But Graves was unable to follow the thread of his speech. To him, the mining claim, Blake, his sister, were of no interest whatever. A self-consuming mantle of alcoholic introspection seemed to enwrap him. And Luke, perceiving that his words were wasted, soon gave over the attempt. He began to consider that he had assumed a serious handicap in snatching Graves bodily out of Seattle.

"Maybe he'll straighten up some by the time we hit Helena," Luke thought. "If he don't, I'll turn him over to a doctor. I ain't got time to operate no sanitarium for jags."

Later, Graves managed to sit up. But even to Luke, who was no physician, it was plain that his double was tottering on the verge of a breakdown, both mental and physical. Food sickened him. When he tried to eat, his stomach refused its natural office. Only whisky would serve. As they rolled east across Washington and the sage-grown levels of Idaho till the blue peaks of the Rockies loomed up ahead, Graves made many an effort to rid himself of the whisky grip. But always it ended in recourse to the little bottles to still his quivering nerves. Sometimes he was as near to madness as a man can get and not step over the border line.

When they detrained at Helena, Montana, Luke bore him straight to a hotel and called a doctor. Then he went out in search of two miners, for time was short, and he was taking no chances of finding quartz men when he got to Harlem. Fortune favored him; at an employment agency he ran across four men with the rock stain of the Marysville mines still fresh on their clothing, and he hired the quartet on the spot. One of these he sent forth to purchase drills and hammers. Such things would possibly be at the mine, but he was taking chances on nothing. Powder he knew he could get in Harlem, and grub and horses. There was a train in two hours, which would land them at their destination late that night. Then he went back to the hotel.

When he walked into the room, it was empty. He looked down in the barroom. Failing to find Graves, he called the doctor on the telephone, a mite dubious as to the result.

"What did you do with my partner?" he asked.

"Gave him something to settle his nerves," the physician promptly responded. "He's in bad shape, that man. I'll be around in about an hour again. I'd advise a hospital for him."

"But he ain't here," said Luke. "I thought maybe you'd taken him some place where he could be looked after."

"Gone, eh?" the doctor's voice came over the wire. "Look around the nearest bars. They always head for the source of supply when they're in that condition. Call me when you find him."

"Can you keep him corralled, if I round him up?" Luke asked.

"Oh, yes," the medico answered. "Hepler's Sanitarium is the best place for him. They are equipped to handle just such cases."

Luke hung up, and began his search. But it proved fruitless. Whatever idea was in Bob Graves' addled mind, he had managed to drop out of sight quite effectively. He was not in any of the saloons on the main street, nor had any one seen a man of his description. Helena is a fair-sized town—and Luke's time was drawing short. He went to the doctor's office and arranged with the physician to have Graves located—through the medium of the police, if no other way sufficed—and cared for till he was sober. Then he joined his quartet of miners and boarded the train

CHAPTER IX.

IT LOOKS EASY.

Luke slept a scant two hours after reaching Harlem. He was up and had routed a grumbling storekeeper and an equally irritated livery-stable man out of their beds before dawn. He needed food, bedding, and sundry supplies, a team and wagon to haul them, and a saddle horse for himself. And the ready cash he displayed stifled all protest at his activity at that ungodly hour. These preparations inaugurated, he sat to to await breakfast, and busied himself meanwhile writing a letter to Dorothy Fair, wherein he cited briefly what had so far transpired.

"I expect," he concluded, in reference to her brother, "he'll be all right in a few days. And I want to tell you that the shape he was in was an eye-opener to me. If whisky can do that to a man, I guess it's a good thing to keep shy of. But we'll get your mine, all right. So long!"

Breakfast, hurried by his vigorous demand, was presently forthcoming, the horses were hitched to the wagon, and they bore south across the flat, sage-covered bottoms of Milk River.

For his personal use, until the mine job was done, as a precaution in case hasty journeys should become necessary, Luke had gotten from the stableman a buckskin horse, a deep-chested, round-barreled brute, restive, but tough

as whalebone. He rode ahead. They were clear of the bottom lands, and heading out the Lodge Pole Trail before the sun was well clear of the sky line. It was a deep-rutted, wide road, until they skirted the red jumble of buildings that was Belknap Agency. Then it dwindled to a mere pair of tracks, running away dimly across the undulating area of the Gros Ventre Reservation.

Luke jogged contentedly on the buckskin. He was home again, on wholly familiar ground, the queer, kaleidoscopic shifts of that forty-eight hours in Seattle now running in his mind like a dream. They would have seemed utterly unreal to him save for that bandaged hand—and the gold locket. Luke grinned at the wide horizons. He had gone forth upon commonplace business, and he returned leading an expedition that savored of a forlorn hope.

"Oh, yuh Little Rockies!" he adjured. "I'll be right with yuh pretty soon!"

They lay far southward, a purple blotch lifting hazily above the general level. And east of their eastern foot, a matter of forty miles, the T Down men were doubtless wondering how long he and Bill Smith would "whoop 'er up" in Seattle. And here he was hurrying to protect property for a man who had let whisky all but ruin him, and for a girl whose pictured smile made his pulses flutter. And Bill Smith was married. Married! The T Down would wait a long time to see Bill come galloping up to the corrals.

The buckskin horse leaped sidewise his own length, snorting foolishly at a white stone in the trail. Luke laughed, swaying to the sudden movement of the brute's muscular body. Then he straightened the buckskin out good-naturedly, and broke him into a little trot, lifting up his voice in a lilting tune; a quaint, improper ditty, chanted on many a night guard between Texas and the North.

At noon, they had encompassed thirty miles. Luke impressed upon the Harlem teamster the need of haste. The four miners sat in the back of the wagon on bundles of bedding, accepting the tedium of the journey with due philosophy, smoking their pipes and conversing of veins and leads and hanging walls, of stopes and lagging and all the varied phases of their trade.

That night, they made camp in timber, a little grove of pines on the bank of Beauharnis Creek. They had reached Horsethief Crossing. The mine lay upstream.

And, with sunrise, at Horsethief, they quitted the road—it was ended, so far as Luke could make use of it. A rough cañon debarred farther progress on wheels in the direction he wished to go. So the food, bedding, tools, and powder was distributed over the backs of the three horses, even the miners took up a burden each.

Even so, the way was far from easy. The north fork of Beauharnis frolicked merrily through a gorge that was annually swept by roaring spring torrents when the mountain snows went off. Bowlders and driftwood, uprooted trees, straight-sided washouts, dotted the way. There they dodged and clambered over as best they might. Two miles or such a matter from Horsethief Crossing, an abrupt closing-in of the gulch forced them up on the hillside. Climbing laboriously, with frequent stops to let the burdened horses take fresh breath, they presently drew up to a huge, yellow scar on the face of the mountain. A quarter of a mile in width, and full a thousand feet from top to bottom it was, where in some time past a great slab of the mountain had broken loose and slid to the bottom, to be washed away by successive floods.

"Here!" growled the teamster.

"What's this? Yuh figure to climb around this? Think these cayuses is goats?"

"Don't worry!" said Luke. "It ain't half so bad as it looks. This is what they call Claybank Slide. Anyway, whatever they call it, there was a trail across about halfway up the last time I was here. I think I see it right now." He scrambled a little way up, the buckskin trampling nervously at his heels. And surely enough he found a dim path running boldly out on the steep face of the Slide. He followed this. The teamster and the miners urged the horses up, and the harness-broken team stepped gingerly out on the trail. Looping and twining, it led them at length out on decently level ground beyond.

"By gum!" the Harlem man volunteered, when a more hospitable slope was under his feet; "I'd sure hate for to have somebody push me off there some dark night."

Luke laughed. Many times in his life he had ridden just such places as that. There was no danger, so long as nothing happened. The buckskin cast a white eyeball backward, and whistled like a buck deer in the running season.

"How'd you like to roll down there, eh, Mr. Buck?" Luke said playfully. "Just thinkin' about it makes yuh snort."

Ten minutes later, they sighted the claim, a six-foot hole gaping in the hillside, and a little below that a rude cabin of logs. Farther south, a newer, more pretentious structure of peeled logs loomed yellow in the eye of a rising sun. Smoke issued from a stovepipe in the roof.

"That, I suppose, is the camp uh the enemy," Luke said, under his breath.

They drew up at the small, deserted cabin. That this was Graves' claim Luke was reasonably sure, but he desired to be positive. So he got out the certificate of staking, and by sundry landmarks, defining its metes and bounds, verified his impression. Then they unloaded the packs from the horses, and the teamster started back.

If Bob Graves had left anything in the way of tools and equipment behind him, he had sedulously concealed them, or they had taken wings. For, barring a worthless drill or two, and a leaky coffeepot and a litter of empty tin cans, the cabin and the mouth of his prospect hole were bare of everything.

"Lucky we brought all we needed," Freeman observed. "Well, you fellers know what's what. We got six days, countin' to-day, to get that work done. I can't do anything else with one crippled hand, so I'll cook. Pile this grub and stuff in the cabin. We'll eat, an' fly at it."

In less than two hours the thing was organized systematically and the work under way. In a shaft such as a prospector sinks, two men can work to a little better advantage than four. Luke, when he hired the four, had this in mind. So when they had straightened up their belongings, two of them, with hammer and drill, hied themselves to the task of drilling in the first "shots." The other two undertook the fashioning of a rude wheelbarrow to muck out the rock after each firing. And Luke glanced across at the other camp when the dull *boom—boom* of his men's first charges sent a slight tremor through the hillside.

"It's easy! It don't look like much of a contract, after all," he grunted.

CHAPTER X.

AN EXCHANGE OF "SHOTS."

But in this Luke was a trifle oversanguine, as the succeeding forty-eight hours proved to his dissatisfaction. With the barrow completed, his two men lay down for a nap, and wakened at supper time to take up the work where the others left off. The roar of their

shots in the dark almost brought Luke out of his bed. Then he remembered, as he saw the two amble down to the cabin to make a fire outside and fry strips of bacon—taking their noon hour, paradoxically, at midnight, while the powder fumes cleared out of the shaft.

He went up the next forenoon to view progress, and was agreeably surprised at the depth gained. All he needed was ten feet. That would go as ample quantity of assessment work. And these men, practiced miners, were making eighteen inches a shift.

"Aw! we'll make it easy," one grunted, resting a moment on his hammer handle. "Easy!"

All day, Luke listened to the clink-clink of hammer on drill head of steel, drifting musically out of the hole. He eyed the other camp with careless assurance, noting the number of men—which he estimated to be three or four—and the goodly dump which faced their shaft mouth out of which the rock came in little dump cars running on a narrow track. By all the signs and tokens, Blake & Co. had done considerable development work. He did not bother his head as to whether Blake had followed him—Blake or one of his partners. He had learned casually in Harlem that Blake was in with three others, named Cole, Merrilees, and Halvorsen, respectively. Ordinarily, if they had attempted to interfere with him, Luke's inclination would have been to walk into their camp and force the issue. As it was, the thing seemed to have resolved itself into a mere matter of getting the work done—which was simple enough, apparently.

It did, indeed, seem ridiculously simple, until some time in the little, hushed hours of the following night. Morss and Big Frank Keen were snoring at one end of the cabin. Luke himself lay dozing by the door. A brilliant moon had sailed in behind the great peaks back of the mine, throwing everything on that side of the mountain into intense shadow, and bathing the plains that ran out from the eastern foothills with a mysterious, silver glow.

Through his sleepy eyelids, Luke saw a fiery rosette burst redly at the shaft mouth, and the cabin shook with the crash of the explosion—no mere cracking of shots on the "face." He came out of his blankets like a cougar. The two miners were only a step behind him as he ran for the shaft, barefooted, dressed chiefly in a suit of underclothes and a gun.

"By the nine gods uh war, what's happened here?" Luke breathed.

Where the square hole had gaped, there was now a ragged jumble of rocks, earth, and timbers. A fourteen-inch bull pine lay uprooted across the lot.

"Hickey an' Brown is in there," one of the men said, under his breath. He began to claw nervously at the shattered timbers.

"No use gittin' excited," Big Frank remonstrated. "If they're all right, they're all right, an' if they ain't, they're done for—an' yuh can't dig 'em out with your hands nohow."

Morss gave over. But he shook his fist futilely at the blockading débris.

"Let's get some clothes on an' get at that with a crowbar an' shovel," Luke said abruptly. He thought of the two men—but also he thought, with a sudden heart-sinking, that perhaps, after all, he might be destined to fail. And he wondered about that blast.

Halfway to the cabin he faced about and stared at the place where the shaft mouth had been.

"How in thunder do yuh suppose that happened?" he asked. "Them fellows knew all about powder."

Big Frank spat viciously.

"Naw!" he growled. "Blame your friends over here. It took half a box uh giant to do that. It's a plant."

Luke swore. For an instant he was

tempted to take his gun in his hand and come to close quarters with those others in the silent cabin beyond. But —there was rescue work to be done. He walked on to the cabin. They dressed, took tools, and returned to the place. By reason of his crippled hand, Luke could do little save pick up and cast aside the smaller stones, such as he could manage with the one good member. Morss and Big Frank, two hard-muscled, husky men, pried and lifted and shoveled till the sweat ran down their faces.

Even so, they made slow progress. The stuff was heavy and the shaft blocked to the roof, almost wholly obliterated. An hour passed and another and a third. They lifted, heaved, and tugged in dogged silence. Finally, just as a light streak grew in the east, Big Frank paused, with the blade of his crowbar under a rock.

"Hist!" he commanded.

They listened, with ears straining, bodies tense. A faint sound seemed to come out of that chaotic heap on which they labored. Luke dropped on his knees, thrusting his head into the hole they had cleared under the edge of the roof.

"Hey!" he shouted. "Are yuh there?"

They listened again. Each could have sworn he heard an answering voice. But it was very faint and distant. They could not be sure. Big Frank listened a moment longer. Then he lifted his crowbar and smote a projecting point of solid rock—three measured blows. In a few seconds came answer dully—*bump—bump—bump!* Big Frank wiped his forehead, and grinned at Luke.

"They're all right," said he. "We'll get 'em out. Let's have a smoke."

But the sun had reeled across his appointed arc and dropped behind the serrated backbone of the Little Rockies before they cleared a sufficient space to let the imprisoned men crawl through. And the face of one was cut and bruised by flying chips of stone. They came out into the yellow haze of evening, breathing a rude jest.

"It was in the contract, wasn't it," said he of the bloody face, "that we was to eat regular? An' here we done lost three meals."

They were out, at least, comparatively uninjured, and that was something. But the four of them were exhausted, and the shaft mouth still choked with débris. Luke stood a minute, after the others had gone down to the cabin. It would take at least twenty-four hours' hard work to clear the tunnel. The spoke in his wheel that Kenworthy had warned him against had materialized.

"I don't know whether we can get this work done in time now or not," Luke said to his four miners, later. "But we'll give it a whirl, if you fellers ain't anxious to back away from this."

"Back away nothin'," growled Hickey, he whose face had suffered. "I been in cave-ins and blow-ups before. Wait till we get a few hours' sleep. We'll be there with bells on."

Three of them fell into their blankets, as soon as they had eaten a bite. But Luke went back to the hole, and Big Frank followed him. It was still fairly light. The miner stood scratching his chin, his deep-set eyes searching the spot.

"I said it was a plant, didn't I?" he muttered at last, pointing with a calloused forefinger.

Luke needed no further evidence than his eyes. The mark of a drill hole stood plain in solid rock six foot aside and above the shaft roof. From there down the explosion had sheared away the material between it and the shaft, bringing down a jumble of stuff with it from above.

"They didn't make that since we came here," Luke said quietly. "So they must have had it ready an' waitin' for whoever showed up to do this assess-

ment work. The bloody skunks! They'd 'a' buried two men alive for the sake uh stealin' a piece uh ground."

"Looks like it," Big Frank agreed shortly.

Luke glowered at the destruction, and began to burn. Without a word, he walked to the cabin, stuck his gun in his trousers waistband, and put a handful of snub-nosed cartridges in his pocket. Big Frank met him as he issued from the door.

"Where yuh goin'?" he asked bluntly, eying Luke.

"Oh, just up here to have a word with these jaspers next door," Luke answered coolly.

"I guess I'll come, too," the miner answered. "Wait a minute."

"Yuh better not," Luke objected. "I'm not goin' to talk pretty to 'em, and I don't know how they'll take it—an' I don't care much. Damned if I'm goin' to stand for any dirty work—I've seen enough uh theirs. But there's no occasion for you to mix in. It ain't your trouble. If I don't come back, why you fellers'll find your pay in the inside pocket uh my coat in the head uh my bed. Send the balance to H. B. Kenworthy, Seattle. Naw, there's no use you gettin' mixed in this, Frank." He stepped past Big Frank. Before he had taken a dozen steps, the miner was at his elbow, panting from the quickness of his movements.

"I got a old smoke wagon m'self," said he. "I don't like to see one man go up against a hard play. Two's better'n one in a case like this."

"All right, if you *will* go," Luke grumbled. "But I'm goin' to give them fellers a wide-open chance to jump me —an' God help 'em if they try it an' don't get me first!"

But Luke's craving for trouble was not to be appeased that evening. When they reached the Blake quarters, he kicked the door open without ceremony, according to his mood. The big room running across one end was empty. So, too, was the kitchen end of the house. Luke and Big Frank passed through and came out facing the dump. A man shortly appeared there. Him Luke hailed. Immediately the fellow, as if he recognized trouble in the offing and wanted none of it, walked back into the shaft mouth without making reply. By that time, Luke had begun to cool off. He stood irresolute a minute or so.

"Aw, if the rabbits are going to stay in their holes, let 'em stay there!" he said contemptuously. "I'll catch 'em in the open some uh these times, an' tell 'em what's what."

"Good idea," Big Frank agreed. "To tell the truth, I never did like this thing uh goin' *lookin'* for trouble. I'd rather let the other feller fetch it to me. Then I can cut loose slam-bang, with no strings on me. Yuh betcha!"

"Considerin' what happened last night," Luke drawled, "I'd say they was tryin' their darndest to bring it to us. But we'll see."

When they all awakened in the morning, tolerably refreshed by the night's sleep, they set to work clearing the blocked tunnel mouth. At noon, two of them laid off. When night came again, they took up the shift, with a bonfire at the shaft mouth, and Luke lying in a clump of pines twenty yards above, his gun beside him, to forestall any more flanking movements. The time they had of necessity lost would almost surely prevent them from getting the work done in time—but Luke meant to have a good try, and he had fortunately equipped himself with men who proposed to go as far as he said. They were more than loyal to their salt. If cleaning out the Blake camp would have accomplished anything toward getting the work done, they would have engaged upon that task quite cheerfully under Luke's leadership.

But open reprisal would avail noth-

ing at that stage of the game. Much as Luke hungered for a chance to play even for dirty work of that sort, he was fully alive to his object there; which was to hold the claim rather than pursue a feud. He could not imagine himself going back to Dorothy Fair with a mouthful of excuses instead of results.

Nor did he really entertain any idea of failure. He knew a little of mining and the rules of the mining game. And up there among the pines, watching the two figures move about in the ruddy glow, he sat considering a card which he had suddenly discovered up his sleeve.

CHAPTER XI.

ACCORDING TO HOYLE.

Four days had now passed. Once more the shaft mouth was clear. But only a scant forty-eight hours remained of the time in which Bob Graves could technically hold the claim. In that limited time it was a physical impossibility for them to complete the work. Luke knew that. If he had not known the four miners would speedily have enlightened him. They worked at high pressure, intensely loyal, eager to see the "boss" come out on top, according to the Western man's single-minded code, but they frankly admitted that the required number of feet was beyond them. The wrecking of the shaft mouth had made too great a hiatus in their working time—and the extra labor counted for nothing under the mining laws. But that explosion, smelling to high heaven of malice aforethought, had one effect: it made the thing a personal matter with the miners. It set forth Cole, Merrilees, Halvorsen, and Blake as the enemy, bred a fine feeling of hostility toward the other camp. The feud was now theirs, and without any blatant assurances on their part Luke knew they would back him unquestioningly in any measure of defense or retaliation.

They spoke of the claim as "ours," remarked profanely that no thus and so claim jumpers could get the best of "us."

"It's a cinch, though," Dave Hickey said, "that they'll try to pull off somethin'. Likely relocate soon's the last minute's up. We can't get this assessment work far enough along to hold her down. What yuh goin' to do?"

They were sitting at supper. Four hundred yards along the slope they could see a round-bodied man with a shock of yellow hair sitting on a log before the Blake cabin, looking their way. Luke stared hard at this figure. Even at the distance, it seemed familiar.

"Why," said he lightly, "seein' we can't hold her on assessment work, accordin' to law; seein' that at one minute past twelve to-morrow night she'll be open to relocation, I figure I'll just naturally relocate her m'self."

Big Frank grinned at his plate.

"That's the idea!" he said.

"They'll be ready to stake," Luke continued. "So'll I. I aim to stake first—if you fellers don't mind takin' a hand. Once I get a location notice up, I'll gamble on beating 'em to a legal filin'. That buckskin can outfoot anything they've got. While I'm gone, it'll be up to you to keep 'em off here. Possession is more'n nine points uh the law in this case. It's the whole works."

"I'd like to see 'em step in here just once," Hickey growled, running his fingers over his scarred features. "Just once. Didn't they try to kill me 'n' Brown? Let 'em get gay once! Frank's got a gun. So've I. We'll hold her down, all right. Yuh betcha!"

"But," put in Big Frank, "it's like as not they got similar ideas about what yuh might do. I'd watch that buckskin horse, I would. They might try to set yuh afoot, at the last minute.

Fact, they're pretty near sure to try somethin' like that."

"They might, all right," Luke admitted. "But they won't try that before the last night. If they give me too much time they know I'd get another horse from the Circle C. Their home ranch is only about ten miles from here. But you bet I'll have old Buck in a safe place all day to-morrow."

So, without any more ado, that matter was settled. Luke wondered if Dorothy Fair and her brother and Kenworthy would think he was taking advantage of the situation to grab for himself a valuable piece of property. He supposed not. As a last resort, the situation explained itself. Once he had it located, it was a simple matter to transfer it back to any one of the three concerned. He did not trouble much over this phase of the affair. Other things pressed so urgently—he was essentially a creature of action rather than analysis.

To make it manifest to the neighboring conspirators that he—Bob Graves supposedly—though Luke having recognized among those present one at least of his Seattle antagonists wondered if they had figured out which was which—meant to hold his own, the miners labored diligently in the shaft. Intent counts for something under the law. If Blake & Co. attempted to jump the claim they would have to do so in the face of prior rights. That might make them hesitate; at least, make them uncertain—they were not the hesitating kind, Luke had discovered in his experience with them. If they set their stakes and got possession, nothing but costly litigation would dislodge them. Even recourse to law might fail. And Luke had vastly more confidence in forcible assertion of rights, when he knew he was right, than he did in any appeal to cumbersome legal machinery.

That day passed. When night came, Luke staked the buckskin at the cabin end, where abundant grass of a sort flourished, and made his bed at the outer end of the picket rope. Big Frank and Hickey slept outside, also. Morss and Brown puttered about the shaft with a flaring fire built to one side. Thus they were amply protected against a stealthy raid. Luke dozed intermittently through the night. During that day he was never out of sight of his horse. True, as an extreme, some one might easily pot the buckskin from the mountain above. But that would lead to instant and sanguinary reprisal, and Luke was very sure they would not invite that, seeing that in point of numbers they were evenly matched. As a matter of fact, he had been unable to distinguish more than four men at the Blake camp.

Dusk came again. With it, Luke wrote out his notice. He had a description of natural boundaries already copied from Graves' filing record. He knew exactly where Graves' corner stake stood. Remained only to await the appointed hour and tack his own notice thereon—then beat Blake & Co. to the legal record. That was where the root of the matter lay, for the first man at the office would file, and his filing would hold unless outright fraud could be shown. It sounded simple—it *would* be simple, unless something happened. Luke had an abounding confidence in his ability to get over fifty odd miles of country as fast as any man that ever crossed a saddle. If there were any horses in that part of the State able to outgame the buckskin on a long trail Luke was very sure he had never run across them in his tolerably wide experience with stock.

It depended on Buck only up to a certain point, however. Luke calculated that he could make it in seven hours, perhaps less, if necessary. He knew that a westbound passenger ran through Harlem at seven-ten. That section of the time-table had lingered

in his memory. If he could make that train and the Blake emissary *failed* to make it, the rest was plain sailing, a mere matter of a seventy-mile ride to the county seat, where was situated the nearest office in which he could file. If he did not get that train, then he would at least have an even break with the other fellow. They would take the next together, and it would be a race from the Benton depot to the office.

"Even if they've got relays of horses on the road to Harlem," Luke reasoned, "he can't get out uh there before seven-ten. I can make that—I *got* to, that's all!"

With that muttered conclusion, he sat himself down to wait for midnight. Whereas time had hitherto swept past with magical swiftness, the hands of his watch seemed suddenly to have become afflicted with grievous slowness. A dozen times he glowered at the dial. Big Frank sucked stolidly at his pipe. The others conversed in hushed voices. Presently even that ceased, and the night silence wrapped them close.

A few little clouds had been trailing lazily across the sky. The last of these went sailing away beyond the mountain range at eleven o'clock. Thereafter a fat moon shone unobscured, spreading a mellow glimmer over peaks and cañons, lighting up the plains below till all that far-rolling area lay like a silver sea, without shore or horizon. Up on the hillside a clink of iron vibrated through the ghostly hush. Luke rose to his feet.

"Come on," said he. "It's time."

The buckskin stood saddled. Hickey stayed by him. Morss and Brown betook themselves to the shaft mouth, for now possession was everything. Luke spread out his notice of location and walked over to the corner stake. Big Frank followed.

As they drew up to it, two figures loomed in the moonlight, advancing from a clump of pines. Luke tacked his paper on the post. Then he wheeled on the two men, now clean-cut in the moon glow.

"Keep off this ground, you!" he called sharply. "You'll get more'n you're lookin' for if you step over the line!"

The men stopped, making no answer.

"Here, here!" Big Frank muttered. "This ain't no time for you to start a scrap, Freeman. Them fellers are drivin' a new stake. You drift! We'll tend to them. See?"

Luke saw. Turning, he ran lightly to his impatient horse. In that white bath of light there was no chance of concealment even had he desired to depart under cover. From the claim to Claybank Slide the footing was all that any range horse needed. The buckskin lunged hard against the bit, and Luke gave him rein.

Thundering along the hillside, a good horse between his legs, sparks flying hot where the shod hoofs clashed with casual stones, bit chains jingling time to the faint squeak of saddle leather, a swift uplift of spirit filled him with recklessness. He restrained an impulse to fling a derisive whoop over his shoulder. And so, deeming himself wholly master of the situation, he pulled the buckskin from a swinging lope to a fast walk as Claybank Slide loomed black and white, all bold lights and deep shadows, ahead.

CHAPTER XII.

A SLIGHT REPAYMENT IN KIND.

He rode out on that grim escarpment altogether unmindful of danger. He was used to such places. Where one less inured to chance taking in the saddle might have cast a wary eye on that rock-studded slope which fell away to a dusky cañon bottom just under his right stirrup, Luke rode with a slack rein, busy with a cigarette. The buckskin's natural instinct would carry him safely

over a worse place in inky darkness, much less on a night all shot with silver beams.

Luke lighted his cigarette. Midway of the Slide, where the narrow trail skirted the lower side of a sheer, upstanding rock ledge, a gun flashed on the brush-patched hill beyond. The bullet smacked sharply on the rock somewhere in the region of the buckskin's nose. Luke felt a bit of chipped stone, or a fragment of spattering lead, sting his knee. And the horse, startled, pivoted on his hind legs to face the other way. The weight of him and the strain of his sudden, panicky movement broke the thin shoulder of clay and sand under his feet. Luke felt him go, visualized in one panoramic flash the four hundred odd feet of declivity slanting below, and heaved himself bodily sidewise. He landed in a jarred heap at the foot of the rock ledge, winning to safety by a clawing grip on the broken earth.

But the buckskin went down. Luke saw him roll twice, kicking and squirming, strike a patch of loose clay, and slide forty feet as a ship goes down greased ways at her launching. Then he rolled again, slid feet uppermost, and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Luke lay in the broken trail, panting curses. Below him the dust rose in a tenuous haze. There was a sound of a heavy object bumping and sliding, a clatter of small stones dislodged and bounding from point to point, a subdued whisper of loose earth trickling down. And after a lapse of five minutes that was still. Off across the cañon an owl lifted up his nocturnal plaint: Who-*hoo!* Who-*whoo!*

Luke lay flat where he fell. But his gun was in his hand, and he lifted a fervent prayer that whoever fired should show himself ever so briefly across the Slide.

But no one showed. The night hush lay thickly on the Slide. And Luke rose to his feet and walked boldly out across the trail. There was an excellent chance of getting drilled, he surmised. But that chance he had to take, and he was too hot to care much. Perhaps they would be satisfied, and consider their point gained, anyway, now that he was afoot. Indeed, so far as Luke could see, it was now a walkaway for Blake & Co. Their man, doubtless now chuckling on the trail ahead, would probably be in Harlem before he, Luke, could get his hands on another mount. He could have kicked himself—yet he could not see how it might have been avoided.

"I'll nail somebody to the cross for this night's work, claim or no claim," he promised savagely. "See if I don't! I'd as soon a man kill me as m' horse. Just a chance I ain't down there with Buck now, all twisted out uh shape!"

He rummaged a little in the scrub pines whence he judged the shot had come. But he wasted little time there, rightly concluding that the man, or men, would by now be well down toward Horsethief Crossing, since the business of eliminating him had been successfully accomplished. He tarried a minute on the edge of the Slide, thinking.

"A few minutes one way or another don't make much difference now," he reflected. "I might manage to cop an Injun cayuse before so very far, if I had a rope. I guess I'll go find what's left uh Buck, an' get the bridle offn him, and my lass rope—if it didn't get busted loose on the way down."

He scrambled along the edge of the Slide toward the bottom. Halfway down, a sound brought him up standing. He listened a second. Brush crackled faintly down in that dusky hollow, a stone clacked. After a little, a splashing of water sounded briefly.

"By Jiminy! maybe some stock has worked up in here off the flats," he said to himself. "Wouldn't I be in luck,

now, if they're horses, an' I could pick up a saddler?"

He cut away from the Slide, so as to get in below any possible stray horses that might have drifted in. Moving very quietly, he gained the narrow floor of Beauharnis, and scanned the timbered hollow for a prospective mount. Presently a faint sound between him and the Slide's jumbled foot caught his attention.

"I'm below 'em, anyway!" he muttered. "Lord send it's a broke horse—an' I can catch him!"

It was a horse, indubitably. Luke got a fair view of him in the next forty yards. He stood, head up, ears cocked, in a little grassy glade bathed by the moon. But it was no stray from the plains—no less a beast, indeed, than his own yellow Buck, standing alert on his own four legs, a golden statue in the moon gleam.

"Hol*ee* sufferin' Jemima!" Luke breathed. "Am I seein' 'em?"

For a second he could scarcely comprehend this unparalleled stroke of luck. Sheer luck, it was—nothing else. A score of horses might go over Claybank Slide in the same place and manner and each be a broken-limbed cripple long before he struck bottom. And here was Buck, scathless, startled in the act of cropping a tuft of grass!

Luke edged up to him carefully, for the buckskin was both wild and nervous, caught him by one bridle rein—the other was broken short off at the bit chain—and felt him anxiously for damaging hurts. But he found none. Barring superficial cuts and bruises, the loss of sundry patches of hair, Buck was sound as a double eagle—which coin well matched the color of his glossy hide. Luke swung into his battered saddle, and stepped his mount across the little flat. He surged against the bit as freely as though he had never seen Claybank Slide.

"Luck—blind, blooming luck!" Luke chortled. "The Lord sure watches over drunk men, children, fools—an' buckskin horses. If that stableman don't sell yuh to me, I'll steal yuh. You and me are partners after this. Now we'll see who gets to the railroad first. Step along, Buck, old boy!"

At sunrise, Luke pulled up on White Bear Creek, fifteen miles from Harlem. He had cut straight across the rolling area of the reservation, riding by the stars. Now he was come to the subagency trail, winding through a sage-dotted hollow, split by a looping stream. Luke dropped into the creek out of sight of the trail, and let the buckskin dip his muzzle in the alkali water. He had seen a horseman drifting in the trail, and he was profoundly interested in horsemen bearing from a southern point toward Harlem. He had plenty of time, now, to make the seven-ten. Leading Buck along the creek bed, he found a straight-walled nook, and anchored Buck therein to a stump of sagebrush. Then he crawled up and lay flat on his stomach in a shallow washout twenty yards from the trail.

The rider forged up, splashed across White Bear, after watering his horse, and topped the low bank.

"I thought maybe it'd be you," Luke murmured grimly. "I just naturally thought so. Now you'll get tit for tat."

The man's face was not wholly strange. Luke had seen it once vividly, in the hallway of that Seattle house. He had chalked up against it a considerable score. First the missile that knocked him down the stairs, the blowing up of the shaft mouth—and Claybank Slide was still hot in his memory. He slid the barrel of his six-shooter across one extended forearm as the rider came abreast at a smooth running walk, his eyes bent eagerly on the trail ahead.

"That's sure a good-lookin' horse," Luke muttered. "I hate to kill him. But I got to stop this hombre without

him seein' me, if I can. Darn the bush-whackin'! But they started it."

He pulled the knife-edged front sight down into the notch fine, holding a little below the black horse's ear, and crooked his finger—a mercifully fatal shot, unless he missed. And Luke was not in the habit of missing at that short range. The horse pitched forward and down, as if a rope had snatched his feet from under him. The man catapulted five yards ahead, striking the hard earth heavily, and lay all spraddled out where he fell.

And Luke, little concerned whether he had stunned the rider or broken his neck—in truth, his sole compunction lay in shooting the horse—backed hurriedly down the washout, untied Buck, and mounted. He loped down the bed of White Bear till he found the mouth of a draw coming in from the north, and through the gut of that concealing hollow gained the general level of the plains, unseen.

Angling back toward the subagency trail, Luke let the buckskin strike a fast gait for the next two miles. Then he slackened pace. He could look back to White Bear. And he could descry dimly on the trail a dot which he surmised would be the man he had so unceremoniously unhorsed.

"Darn him!" Luke growled. "He had it comin'! I guess that'll hold *him* for a while."

The smoke of a train loomed far down the track when Luke dismounted at the stable. He was most painfully stiff and sore. Even to a hardened rider seven hours straight in the saddle is no joke—particularly when a hard fall is sandwiched in, besides. Also, he was hungry, but there was no time to eat.

"I'll be back after Buck in a day or two again," he told the stableman. "An' I'll sure scalp you if yuh hire him out to anybody else betweenwhiles. I've give him a hard ride. Feed him oats. So long!"

He sprinted for the depot and caught the train without tarrying to buy a ticket. And he settled back on a seat tolerably sure that he had checkmated any other prospective relocater. As a matter of fact, he had been the only passenger to get aboard. Cole or Halvorsen, or whichever one he happened to be, was some place between Harlem and White Bear, trudging in a hot sun, and cursing the luck. Luke grinned at this comforting picture. Then he transacted the usual business with the conductor, and sought the dining car, for saddle weariness and soreness of body had not impaired his appetite.

By noon of that day, he had accomplished all that he had set out to do and was resting comfortably in an armchair in the Grand Central Hotel. The record of relocation was stowed in his pocket. Upon failure to register assessment work a mining claim automatically reverts to the government, and may be entered upon by the first comer. So he had had no troublesome red tape to disentangle. And he was now lazily deciding what his next move should be. He had already sent a laconic telegram to Kenworthy:

Couldn't get work done. Relocated claim myself. FREEMAN.

He had to make some report to Kenworthy, he conceived, since that gentleman was the financial sponsor for his activity. It did not occur to Luke that his wire might be taken in a misleading sense, or, indeed, that his action could be misconstrued. He did not give the matter any thought at all. He would write fully to Kenworthy before he went back, but just at that moment he was blocking out in his mind a letter to Dorothy Fair. And while he was thus pleasurably occupied a hand fell rudely upon his shoulder—a grip

the reverse of friendly. He twisted about in his chair, to face his double once more.

Graves was sober, apparently. Also he was angry. His gray eyes gleamed unwholesomely, and his jaw was outthrust at a distinctively aggressive angle.

"Hello, you're on deck once more, are yuh?" Luke greeted. He saw clearly enough that Graves was stirred up about something, but he did not associate it with himself. "What's up?"

"What's up?" Graves snarled echo. "I like your gall—to ask me that. But you don't want to think for a minute you can get away with it."

Luke restrained an earnest desire to punch him first and ask questions afterward.

"Get it out of your system, whatever it is," he said quietly. "What's hurting yuh? You act like a man that's lookin' for trouble. I don't know's you'll have to hunt very far, if you keep on talking like that."

"Oh, yes, I know! You've got a reputation as a he-wolf in this country," Graves sneered. "I've been asking a few questions about you the last hour. I'm not going to scrap you—not here and now, anyway. But I'm going to tell you a few things, no matter how hard a citizen you happen to be. You can't beat me out of that claim. Sabe? I'd kill you first, if it came to a show-down! I've been to the office and seen your relocation. Now, you were hired to go there and do certain work. You were acting under Kenworthy's instructions, as my agent. You can't hold that claim, and you'd better not try."

"Don't you fool yourself!" Luke snapped. "I can hold it, all right—if I want to. I know a little about minin' law myself. You—you're a peach, to come and tell me what I'll do with that claim! You that soaked yourself in whisky till you didn't know whether you were afoot or a-horseback—while another man went out an' took the hard knocks! You'll tell *me* where to head in at, will yuh?"

The memory of all that stress, the risks run and chances taken, and the hurts endured, with this on top of it all, maddened Luke beyond reason. His right hand was still painfully tender. But there was nothing the matter with the left, and Luke, among his other physical gifts, verged close upon the ambidextrous. He caught Graves on the point of the chin—almost such a blow as he had used to fell the Seattle policeman.

He experienced a swift revulsion of feeling, amounting to a measure of shame, when he had stretched Graves on the floor. For he knew that the man was in no shape for such handling. He was rotten soft from months of idleness and dissipation, and only a week since a victim of delirium tremens, a thing of shattered nerves. Luke was sorry. He might have been at better business. But the thing was done. And when two of the hotel attendants picked Graves up and took him away to care for him, Luke walked out the streets of the little river town, inwardly bewailing the things that came his way.

"I don't run into nothin' but trouble," he complained to himself. "Don't matter how I try to dodge it. Hang him! As if I wanted to steal his blasted claim! For two pins I would, now."

But he knew better than that. He was not made that way. That peculiar "right" of modern business which justifies breaking the spirit of a trust if the letter of it be kept intact, had not corrupted him or his kind.

One thing he did resolve to do, and do quickly—get that incubus of a mining claim off his hands, and let them wrestle with it themselves. He had done all he promised—considerably more, for he had not guaranteed to burn powder in their behalf. He had saved

the property in the teeth of the Blake combination. The girl and Kenworthy had commissioned him to act. And to them he would make it over without delay.

Luke thereupon wrote a very explicit letter to Big Frank Keen, advising him of the relocation, and directing that the new assessment work be pushed so that Blake would have no loophole left to get in. This missive he addressed to the Harlem stableman, with a note directing that individual to forward the letter at once by messenger to the mine. Then he consulted a time-table. A train went west at two o'clock.

"I'll be broke payin' out railroad fare by the time I get back," he said to himself, as he climbed the coach steps. "But when I get back I'll be through."

He laid a good deal of emphasis on the last word.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DUBIOUS WELCOME.

From the depot, Luke walked up to Second Avenue. He had neither bag nor baggage to trouble him, and the fact that his clothes still bore considerable Montana dust did not make him in the least self-conscious. More weighty matters occupied his mind. The only concession he made to appearances was to get a shave in the first barber shop he sighted. Then he took stock of the time. It was ten o'clock. Luke bore straight for the establishment where Dorothy Fair was employed. He reflected that she would be highly anxious to know that everything was all right, and to learn a few of the details; and he did not suppose she stood in such deadly fear of the floorwalker as she had suggested at their first meeting in the place. He could tell her a lot in two or three minutes, anyway. And he wanted to see her—he was quite frank with himself about that.

He found the place easily enough, and this time took the elevator. When he stepped out on the floor Dorothy's back was turned. He was at her counter before she faced about.

She gave a quick start of astonishment. Then a frigid expression swept the surprise from her face.

"Well, I'm back kinda soon," Luke began. "What's the matter?" he ended abruptly.

The girl twisted a bit of string in her fingers. Her expression was stonily disapproving, scornful almost.

"Really," she said, "I'm sure you didn't intend to ask that."

"What *is* the matter with you?" Luke persisted stubbornly, though he experienced a premonitory sinking of the heart, guessing that perhaps her brother had been busy over the wire.

"Nothing," she said curtly. "I'm disappointed, that's all."

"So," Luke commented slowly. "I guess you've been hearing things about me that don't sound good. Is that it?"

"It isn't what I've heard; it's what you've done," she lowered her voice, but it was tense with feeling. "I didn't think you were that sort of man. Perhaps you considered it only good business to take advantage of the situation. That point of view is common enough. But—I'd hate you—if it were worth while. As it is, you're merely despicable."

She turned her back on him deliberately, making pretense to arrange certain goods on the shelves. And Luke caught his breath.

"I see," he said laconically. "Thank yuh. *Thank* yuh."

He walked to the elevator, avoiding sight of the mirror lest he should again be seared by that contemptuous curl of her lip. And so he gained the street, and walked along it heedlessly, cut to the quick, boiling within.

"I wish I'd never seen this infernal town!" he snarled, "nor anything in it. I'll go fix up that business with Ken-

worthy, and get to the devil out o' here."

He sought the lawyer's office without more ado. After a minute of waiting he was ushered in. Kenworthy greeted him suavely. If he were surprised at seeing Luke he managed to conceal it quite effectually.

"How-de-do?" said he. "Have a seat. Wasn't—ah—quite looking for you."

"Get m' telegram?" Luke asked shortly.

"Yes," Kenworthy assured.

"Did *you* think I aimed to grab that claim for myself?" he demanded aggressively. When it came to dealing with men Luke was quite sure of himself.

Kenworthy smiled.

"My dear fellow," said he, "I'm a lawyer, and in the course of a moderate lifetime I have acquired the legal point of view. I never jump at conclusions without some evidence to support the same. However, you'll admit that your wire was a trifle ambiguous."

He fished the yellow slip out of a drawer.

"'Couldn't get work done. Relocated claim myself,'" he read. "Now that doesn't make anything clear except that Bob Graves has lost title to his claim, and that said title is now vested in you."

"But darn yuh," Luke answered hotly. "I was up against it. It was me or Blake. Why the devil does everybody think I'm a sneaking crook because I took the only way I could see to win out? There's Graves' papers. There's the record of my stakin'. I'll transfer it to you, an' yuh can do as yuh damn please with it. Also I'll return you some of this money you furnished for expenses. Some I'll keep till I can get back to the Little Rockies. There's four men workin' on this claim. After they're paid off I'll return the balance. I've done all I set out to do, and all I got out of it is a black eye. The whole kit an' kaboodle of yuh can go plumb to the hot place! I'm through!"

He was dumping gold coin and crumpled bills out of his wallet on the lawyer's desk as he spoke.

"Easy, now, Freeman, go easy!" Kenworthy protested earnestly. "Don't get excited. Somebody has got your back up by taking it for granted that you hadn't done this on the square. But please remember that's not *my* attitude. I sized you up in the beginning as a man who could be trusted under any circumstances—and since I got your wire I've simply been sitting back waiting for further details. You must admit that to people with a lot at stake, who had no idea what was being done, that telegram would not be reassuring."

"That's no reason they should jump at fool conclusions," Luke declared. "I said I'd hold that claim for Graves, didn't I? Ain't a man's word worth anything?"

"Yours is," Kenworthy returned. "I had an idea it was when I took a chance on you. And my judgment is proven correct. But it's a melancholy fact, Freeman, that I wouldn't trust many men to pass up a chance of getting something big for nothing. Now I want you to tell me just exactly what happened, and how it happened."

Luke could scarcely refuse that, and so entered upon a recital of the various moves in the game. Whenever he showed an inclination to slur details Kenworthy took him back over the ground, so that Luke omitted nothing relevant. The lawyer growled and muttered epithets over the explosion and the near tragedy on Claybank Slide. He chuckled till his portly figure shook when Luke described how he had turned the tables on White Bear Creek. And something of the soreness evaporated from Luke as he talked; the flame of his anger had died down, leaving only a real sorrow that his lady of the locket should condemn him unheard.

"And there yuh are," he concluded. "I did the best I could, an' it makes me pretty blamed sore to have Graves and his sister think I'm next thing to a blamed thief."

"They'll change their tune directly," Kenworthy smiled. "I wouldn't bother about that."

"I don't intend to. I don't know as it makes any difference to me," Luke replied moodily. "I'm kinda sorry I landed on Graves the way I did. He wasn't in shape to fight a sick woman, let alone a man. You can tell him I said so. I don't suppose I'll see either of 'em again."

"Oh, yes, you will," Kenworthy assured positively.

"I don't know as I want to," Luke demurred.

"Look here," Kenworthy leaned forward and tapped Luke's knee with a pencil. "Let's get down to business. What—ah—do you usually earn on the range?"

"Fifty dollars a month and grub, mostly," Luke replied.

"Well, you won't get rich at that very fast," the lawyer continued. "Now let me show you what I'm driving at. I'm not a rich man myself—not so well off I'll refuse to make a few thousand dollars if the chance comes my way. I'm interested in this claim—financially interested. Graves signed over to me a half interest in the claim as security for the thousand dollars I advanced him. Personally, I did it on Dorothy's account. With me there was a certain amount of sentiment mixed into the thing. I've known her people, and the girl herself. I had a sneaking idea that Bob had tapped her for all she could spare, and I wanted to protect her when it seemed that he might lose this property. Bob's all right—but you can't depend on him—can't depend on anybody who trifles with John Barleycorn the way he does. The boy will never be any good to himself or any one else until he cuts out the whisky. At that, he's a pretty good sort, and smart as a whip. If he should take a fresh hold on himself, there's no reason why he shouldn't make good all the way through. But for the present he's too uncertain a quantity to bank on. I believe I can do well for them both—the girl's out of place behind a counter—and do it with profit to myself. I believe that claim is valuable. Seems to be the key to the situation. Get me?"

"I expect it is. This Blake bunch thought it was worth having, the play they made for it," Luke answered.

"Well," said Kenworthy, "I think I'll force the issue. If the Graves claim contains the apex of a rich ore vein, it commands the adjoining claims. You can legally transfer your title to me. Then I shall go after these fellows with a club, because they're in bad—I can make 'em think they're headed for the penitentiary before I get through with them. Buy 'em out for a song, or make 'em buy the Graves claim for a stiff figure, if they've got the money. Supposing I acquired the entire group? The method would be to organize a company and do some development work. I think it would look good to capital. If the ore's rich, we might work it ourselves. Anyway, the big men jump at a properly organized proposition—if the goods are there. I want you to go back, take charge, keep your men going till I can get on the ground. Hundred a month and all expenses—until we make other arrangements. What d'you say?"

"What do I want to go back there for?" Luke asked querulously. "I've been in hot water ever since—ever since I heard about the blamed thing. I don't want no more truck with this Graves bunch. They think I'm crooked."

"But I don't," Kenworthy declared earnestly, "and *I'm* doing this. See? I'm in fifteen hundred cold cash. I've

got to spend more, or else throw up my hands and let Graves fiddle around with this claim, and perhaps lose it some other way. That makes me loser. What's more to the point, it squashes Dorothy Fair's chance of ultimate independence, and she deserves something better than a job in a department store. Now I feel sure I can put this deal through with profit to them, and make some money myself, incidentally. I want you to help me, and make a little yourself—incidentally. See the point? This is between you and me. If that claim is worth a bunch of money, you have something coming. I have to see this thing through. There's no depending on Bob Graves, the condition he's in. You've demonstrated that a man can go the limit on you. Therefore, logically, you're the man I need. Try it a while, anyway."

"All right," Luke agreed. "I will, if you put it that way."

"In that case," Kenworthy beamed, and looked at his watch, "let's go out to luncheon, and fix up the details later."

The "details" were tolerably simple, so easily arranged that Luke was rolling eastward again before sundown, with five hundred dollars more of Kenworthy's money on his person—and, alas! a heavy heart. His fingers, searching his pockets for a match, touched the gold locket, and somehow a lump insisted on rising in his throat.

"Darn it!" Luke whispered. "What did she let me kiss her for? I wish I'd never seen her. It isn't a fair shake!"

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE NATURE OF A COMPROMISE.

No incident out of the ordinary broke the monotonous return journey. Luke reached Harlem in due course, talked the stableman out of the buckskin horse at a price of fifty dollars, and broke away for the mountains with a new Remington slung under his right stirrup leather. But he rode in a less lightsome mood than on the first trip over that same route. All the savor was gone out of the undertaking. He could explain it to Dorothy Fair—very likely Kenworthy would forestall that, too—but he did not want to explain. He resented the need of explanation, resented her thinking the worst of him when he was doing his best. This was the barb that rankled. He could not understand so great a lack of faith after such implicit trust as she had bestowed on him in the beginning.

He rode easily, somewhat comforted by his native environment. The vast roll of the prairies spread, hushed and somnolent, under a hot June sun. Prairie dogs chirped shrill protest as he passed through their conical-mounded cities. Wild cattle viewed him unmoved, and bunches of wilder horses fled at his approach, raising a tenuous dust cloud from earth parched by a rainless month. Once from afar he descried a dark blot creeping over the plain, two wagons and a horse herd drawing ahead and a score of riders bobbing away to a far sky line—the Circle C or the Square on round-up, he surmised, and wished himself one of them, with Graves' claim and Dorothy Fair blotted out of his ken.

Dusk overtook him at Warm Springs. He picketed Buck, ate the food he had provided against such an event, wrapped himself in a single blanket, and slept. Dawn came, and he took the trail again, reaching the mine at ten o'clock. On the spur of the moment, he passed the claim, with a wave of his hand to Big Frank, standing in the shaft mouth, and rode into the Blake camp.

If a reception committee had been formed for his benefit, his coming could not have fallen more pat. The full quartet was on hand, before the roomy

house of logs: big Halvorsen, whose horse he had shot on White Bear; Blake, pulling sourly at his black mustache; and two other men, whom he supposed would be Cole and Merrilees.

"Howdy, gentlemen," Luke greeted ironically. "Fine day, this."

"I guess yuh didn't come here to talk about the weather," Blake growled. "If yuh did, yuh can keep on goin'."

"Well, no, I didn't," Luke returned coolly. He twisted sidewise in his seat, resting straight-legged in one stirrup, looking down at them out of narrowed, hostile eyes. "I just dropped in to tell you all to step mighty easy around here. I'm on to yuh, bigger'n a wolf. My name is Freeman—which you probably know, seein' one uh yuh likely took the trouble to look up my relocation of this Graves claim. If you bother me any more I'll clean the bunch of yuh. Sabe? And what's left of yuh I'll see goes up to Deer Lodge for a spell. I've got the drop on yuh in more ways than one, and don't you forget it for a minute. Yuh weren't quite so smooth as you thought about that explosion, or tryin' to kill me on Claybank the other night. Just let that soak into your system before you monkey with me any more. There'll be a lawyer out here to see yuh in a day or two."

Having dropped these verbal bombs, Luke turned his horse. He did not intend to argue the matter with them. And he was not at all uneasy over their taking such radical measures as a snap shot at him, under the circumstances. As a matter of fact, his assured front seemed to put the whole quartet up in the air. They looked at one another, and while they were looking thus dumbly the buckskin carried Luke, at a deliberate walk, toward his own ground.

He gave his men an inkling of the trip's result, and repeated what he had said to Blake & Co.

"I guess that'll hold 'em for a while," he laughed. Anyway, you fellers keep peggin' along till further orders."

Big Frank nodded.

"I don't think we'll have any more trouble with that layout," he observed. "They're beat, an' they know it. They can't win anything by fightin' now."

A steady routine settled on the camp. The four men worked a day shift entirely, two drilling on the face, the others mucking out and timbering as they went, since there was more than mere assessment work ahead of them. Luke cooked their meals, and loafed restlessly betweenwhiles.

"She's a nailin' good prospect," Hickey remarked, exhibiting a bit of rock, when he came off shift one evening. "Look at that."

"That" was a bit of quartz, reddish brown with iron stain or oxidization of some base metal. In the clean fracture, where the hammer had broken it off the lead, it was threaded with a faintly perceptible strand of yellow—free gold.

"Yes," Luke remarked. "It's pretty good stuff when you can see it with the naked eye. But Kenworthy told me Graves got three different assays that run a hundred and twelve dollars. You fellows want to save that rock. How big's the vein?"

"About twenty inches wide, and blamed thin yet," Big Frank told him. "But she's thickening up as we get in. This Graves was lucky to hit the tip end of her. Yes, we're saving the good rock. Graves did, too. He had a little pile of it in the entry when we come here. Remember?"

Luke recalled it, but he had not been concerned with rock values then so much as holding the ground. But he was glad, in a way, to have the prospective richness of the vein confirmed, to know that it promised big things. Kenworthy and the girl would come out all right. As for what benefits might ac-

crue to Graves, that was none of his concern.

A week later, as Luke roosted on a log before the cabin, chafing at his enforced inactivity, and wishing the broken hand would strengthen sufficiently to let him work at something worth while, a buckboard came down the hill behind the Blake camp. There was a rude sort of a wagon road, Luke had discovered, leading from their quarters, converging with the main trail a little way south of Horsethief Crossing. It was not necessary to cross Claybank Slide unless a man wished—though the Slide was a short cut, and safe enough for a mounted man. He eyed the buckboard casually. It stopped at Blake's house. Two men rode in it. One got out and entered the place, apparently. After a lapse of minutes he returned, climbed in over the front wheel, and the rig came on toward Luke's claim, careening drunkenly along the rough sidehill. When it neared sufficiently, Luke saw that the two occupants were Kenworthy and a deputy sheriff from Fort Benton. They drew up at the cabin.

"By Jove!" the lawyer grunted as he stiffly descended. "You sure need a good-roads movement started in this country, Freeman. Ouch! My old bones. Let me make you acquainted with Mr. Dulaney, who says he's heard of you, and never heard anything good."

"Aw, I know Dulaney this long time," Luke grinned. "You don't want to believe anything he tells yuh. He's holdin' down a political job. That ought to show yuh how much regard he's likely to have for the truth. Say, Spike," he turned to the man from the sheriff's office, "you'll have to picket the horses. We're just out uh hay an' barns."

Kenworthy sat down on the log and prattled of the view and the exhilarating quality and marvelous clearness of the thin plains air. When the team was disposed of, and Luke told them to make themselves at home while he started supper preparations, Dulaney curled up with his back against the log, but the lawyer followed him in.

"Well, how goes it?" he inquired, ensconcing himself on a bunk in the corner.

"Pretty fair," Luke replied. "Things have been kinda dead since I came back. The boys are drivin' the hole right along and uncoverin' some nice rock. I put a bug in these fellers' ear the day I got in, and since then they've left us strictly alone. That's about all."

"I put another bug in their ear today," Kenworthy chuckled. "Did you wonder what took me so long? I had to stop off in Benton and get out an injunction forbidding 'em to cut in on that vein. Apex claim, you know. There's precedent for it. Dulaney served the papers just now. I think we've got 'em sweatin'. People like that are always shy of the law, if they happen to get on the wrong side of it. I don't think they'll want to go into court. They'll sell."

"Buy 'em out, will yuh?"

Luke's mind was divided between the lawyer and the potatoes he was peeling with a razor-edged pocketknife. He was not so very much interested in this matter of finesse.

"If I get a favorable report from a mineralogist, yes," Kenworthy responded. "In fact, I think I'll make an offer to-morrow before I start back, anyhow. It's good ground they've got, without a doubt. They hauled out ten ton of stuff this spring that netted 'em twelve hundred dollars. I got that straight from the mill where they had it reduced."

Luke shrugged his shoulders.

"It's better to be born lucky than rich," he observed. He was thinking more particularly of Bob Graves, who, in spite of himself, was due to get a goodly share of this natural treasure.

Kenworthy seemed to divine the current of his thought.

"Graves is down on his back again," he remarked. "Went on a big toot in Benton, when he thought he'd lost his claim for good. Dorothy came that far with me, to take care of him."

"Huh!" Luke grunted.

A conversational hiatus ensued, during which Kenworthy devoted himself to a cigar and Luke to his supper preparations. Presently the four miners knocked off work, firing their holes as they left the shaft. The blast of three simultaneous shots set up a faint quiver in the cabin walls. Then they ate, in relays, for the camp-dish equipment had not been selected with a view to entertaining.

Then dusk fell, and they smoked under the twin bull pines by the door a little while before turning in.

In the morning Kenworthy examined the shaft, frankly and exuberantly interested in everything pertaining to mines and mining. He bombarded Luke and Big Frank Keen with questions, pawed over the rock formation and the vein of reddish-brown ore. The deputy sheriff lolled in the shade and consumed Kenworthy's cigars. Noon came and passed. Nearing two o'clock, Kenworthy got up off the soft earth, where he had been taking an after-dinner nap.

"I'm going over to talk to this Blake crowd," said he, and ambled off toward the other camp.

In three-quarters of an hour he was back, chuckling to himself. He beckened Luke aside.

"Well, I got 'em," he grinned expansively. "Bought 'em out—or as good as bought. They wanted forty thousand. But they'll take ten, and be thankful it's no worse."

"You goin' to give them fellers ten thousand dollars after what they pulled off?" Luke demanded. "You're crazy! I wouldn't give 'em a pleasant smile!"

"Nay, nay, Pauline! I'm not handing out ten thousand-dollar chunks of coin without a string to it," Kenworthy returned placidly. "What I've got is an option to purchase in sixty days at that price. Five hundred down. I've got 'em tied up in black and white. We get immediate possession of the whole works. They're whipsawed, and they know it. They as good as admitted that they don't want litigation, because they have cut into the vein that takes its apex on Bob's ground.

"Now, I can go into court and have that injunction made permanent—perhaps. That might mean quite a bunch of money in costs—if they fought it. This is the cheapest way. They've done a lot of work. I didn't examine it, but they claim two hundred and fifty feet of tunnel. It depends, of course, on the mining engineer's report whether I take up that option. But if their claims are not worth that to us they're not worth having. Recollect that there are four claims in their group, and we can have a big suit over each individual one of them if it comes to a question of law. I suppose your delightfully primitive method would be to run 'em off with a six-shooter, but this other will be a lot easier on the nerves. It's business with me now. I don't like to scrap unless I have to, and this looks like the wisest settlement of the whole difficulty. We acquire valuable ground without any further complications."

"Well, you're the doctor," Luke grinned at Kenworthy's earnestness.

"With five claims in a group, and a good start in development work," he lawyer pursued, "I'll guarantee to make some capitalists I know sit up and take notice. I haven't got the necessary funds to properly capitalize and develop a gold mine myself. But I know men who will pay a fat figure for one that is worth development. I can spend *some* money in this, however, aside from the purchase, in the event that I do pur-

chase, and I fully expect to do so. I want you to expand a little here. Move into these fellows' quarters. Get about four more men and whatever equipment is necessary to drive the work on this claim. When I get a report from an expert, I'll wire you whether to continue on this claim, or the other, or both. I intend to keep mum about this until we've got about six solid months' development to show a buyer. Then we'll reach out for the big money."

"Maybe you'd ought to get a more experienced man in charge here," Luke suggested doubtfully. "I'm not what you'd call an authority on mine work."

Kenworthy eyed him curiously.

"Huh!" he grunted presently. "I suppose you can learn. You have a faculty of getting things done, I notice. And besides, you've got—well—ahem—I want you to continue in charge indefinitely. You get me, don't you? Unless you've something better in view."

"Hardly. I'd go get me a job on round-up, that's all," Luke replied. "Only—well, I'll hold it down if you say so. Unless your man Graves comes and horns in. Then I'll just naturally walk off."

Kenworthy pursed up his lips thoughtfully.

"Technically," said he, "Bob Graves has no longer any voice in this claim, one way or the other. You'll remember that you legally transferred it to me. I'm merely holding it in trust, of course, with an interest which may be greater or lesser, as the final arrangements decide. But I'm going to keep it in my hands for the present, chiefly to deprive Mr. Robert of all chance to mess things up again. He might take hold and carry it through successfully; again, he might make ducks and drakes of it. No, I'll make it clear to him that he won't have anything to say to any one but me."

"All right," Luke said. "I've got no grudge against Graves," he explained, after a brief pause. "Only if I'm going to run a thing, I won't take orders from more than one man. Seein' Graves thought I tried to jump his blasted claim, an' that I knocked him cold for sayin' so, we wouldn't get on very good."

"No, I suppose not," Kenworthy drawled. "You're neither what I'd call mild-mannered. Robert, when he's himself, might give you a hard tussle, too, young man. That astonishing resemblance doesn't stop at your faces. I wouldn't want you two to lock horns in dead earnest. However, that's beside the point. There'll be no interference from that source. I think that's all. I know a mining engineer named Hall, whose word is worth money in the proper quarters. I'll get him if I can. Let's see, too, about current expenses—I'd better open an account in Benton that you can draw on. Use your own judgment about equipment. Eight or ten men should make quite a showing in the summer. Is there anything else I can do for you—I mean when I get back to the coast?"

Luke shook his head.

"Yes, there is, too," he amended, after a second. "If you're goin' into this thing for six months or a year's work with a bunch uh men, I'll need a team on the road and around here most of the time. Why not pay expenses as we go along? If this ore's high grade, when there's a trip to the railroad, why not haul out two or three ton? Course it's got to be high grade to pay for that long haul. But it might be worth tryin'. If these fellers did, we can. There's a man in Seattle I'd like to have—if he'll come. He's just married. He works in the Bank Stables on Pike Street. You get the stable number out uh the book an' call him up. Tell him what I'm doin', an' ask him if he wants to drive team for me. Sixty a month an' board, tell him. Maybe his wife would cook for the bunch—offer the two of 'em a hundred an' ten. That's

what a teamster an' a cook would cost, anyhow. I'd like to give old Bill a better job than he's got. I know a cow-puncher wouldn't rest easy in a town very long. An' he's a rattlin' good hand with a team."

Kenworthy jotted down the name of the stable, also Bill Smith's home number and street, and assured Luke that he would attend to the matter personally.

"Well," said he, "I think that's all. The Blake outfit is supposed to vacate to-morrow. Their house will be a lot better than this piano box Bob has here. Let's see—it isn't quite three o'clock. I wonder if Dulaney would start back now?"

He stuck his head out of the door and propounded this query to the man himself.

"Sure, if you're ready," the deputy answered. "We can stop at the stage station to-night, and make Harlem in time to catch the westbound noon train to-morrow."

Half an hour later they shook hands with Luke and departed.

CHAPTER XV.

GETTING ORGANIZED.

In line with Kenworthy's statement, the Blake crowd vacated their premises the following forenoon. One of the quartet, a small, active, middle-aged man, who introduced himself as Cole, came over to see Luke.

"I got an inventory of tools an' supplies for you," he said, handing over a sheet of paper. "Kenworthy agreed to make 'em good if he reneged on the option. But I don't reckon he'll back up from that, do you?"

"Well, I don't know. He isn't in the habit uh backin' up unless there's a good reason," Luke replied, wondering a little at the amiability of his visitor.

"He's crazy if he does," Cole returned. "It'll cost him more if he undertakes to freeze us out, even if *we* don't get a red cent. She's as good a prospect as I've seen opened up in twenty years' minin'. The other boys is dead sore. But I ain't. Yuh outlucked us, that's all. That an' a blamed snide law that gives the feller that lights on the apex all the best of it. I wasn't strong for this monkey business, no time. I said in the beginning that we ought to take Graves into combination an' pool the group. Graves would 'a' been glad to. And we'd all been winner. These five claims is worth a hundred thousand dollars without another lick struck on 'em, only this Graves claim happens to be the keystone. At that, there's another lead crosses 'em all, which might turn out good, although it's low grade where it crops out. If Kenworthy organizes a company, I aim to take my cut uh that ten thousand in shares. Well, so long. No hard feelin's, I guess."

"Not against you in particular," Luke said frankly. "But I got a bone to pick with whichever one of yuh shot at me on the Slide that night. And I'll trim Blake any time I get a chance. He's poison, that feller. A yellow dog all the way through."

Cole grinned.

"I'm in the clear," said he. "Blake's style don't suit me, either. Seems to me, though, you trimmed him good and plenty in Seattle. Halvorsen ain't quit joshin' him about that yet."

"He wants to walk away 'round me, that's all," Luke growled, sore even at the recollection of that Seattle episode.

"I guess maybe he will," Cole laughed. "Well, so long."

Luke and his miners moved that afternoon into quarters vastly more roomy and comfortable than Graves' rude shack. They explored the Blake tunnel after that. It burrowed straight in horizontally till it crosscut a well-defined lead. Then, turning sharply, it followed

that in a northerly direction. Big Frank opined that the face of their shaft was already over the Graves line. Luke stepped the distance inside, and on the surface, and verified this. They were sixty feet outside their legal boundaries —which explained much. And there was at least forty ton of picked quartz stacked just outside the entry, back from the main dump.

"She's a lulu," Big Frank declared. "Just about the finest workin' layout I've seen in a long time. That's a bird of a lead. All you want is a battery uh stamps an' a amalgamator to have a bonanza producer. Even an *arrastra* would be pretty good for a start."

Luke left them the day following to peg along in the Graves tunnel, and hied himself to the railroad. He expected to hear from Kenworthy whether Bill Smith was coming. Also he was profoundly disgruntled with his self-imposed task of cooking. He intended to relieve himself of that job, whether Mrs. Bill took it up or not. He found a telegram, however, hot off the wire, as he rode into Harlem:

Draw First National, Benton, to five thousand dollars. B. S. en route. K.

Luke smiled at the brevity of this rather important communication. At the post office he found a registered letter from the bank requesting a sample of his signature, and inclosing a check book for his use. That small detail attended to, Luke wired an employment agency in Helena to send him down four first-class miners. Then he tried to deal with the stableman for work horses, and finding that gentleman inclined to drive a hard bargain, mounted the buckskin and broke for the T Down Ranch. He was not minded to squander Kenworthy's money, and he knew he could buy work stock there cheap. Also he had a few personal belongings out there, and a very good saddle horse that he desired to have again, now that he was located for a while.

"A hundred a month ain't to be sneezed at," Luke soliloquized. "And this bossin' a real mine job is not so bad, either."

Which philosophical observation was by way of a defensive protest against the rankling memory of Dorothy Fair. Sometimes he felt like getting as far as possible from the Little Rockies and all that served to remind him of her. But he knew that he could not get away from himself. And contrariwise, he treasured that gold locket, carried it in the worn leather wallet with his money. But he never opened it and smiled reminiscently at the face within, as he used to do.

From the T Down, where he was hailed with many facetious remarks upon his long absence, and received the pressing offer of a job, he returned to Harlem with his old round-up bed packed on his chubby bay, private, and four stout chunks of harness horses. Since the journey had consumed three days, he found Bill Smith there when he got in. Also the four required miners from Helena.

Bill was a trifle more than pleased to get back to what he called "God's country." Town was all right—for a while. Sure. He would drive team for Luke till the cows came home. Yuh betcha! And Mary would cook for the crew, so *she* said. Bill let it be understood quite positively that he was not in favor of his wife cooking anybody's grub but his own.

"But Missus Bill, she says we can use that hundred an' ten," Smith grinned widely. "So I ain't got much say. She bosses me scandalous, Luke. But she can cook, all right. She feeds *me* blamed good, I know."

Mrs. Smith smilingly refuted Bill's assertion of feminine autocracy. Married life, Luke shrewdly observed, was working out all right for Bill and Mary. If there was any friction, it was not visible to an outsider. Bill, who afore-

time, had never struck a town, that Luke remembered, without getting on a hilarious celebration, paid scant heed to the two Harlem saloons. To be sure, he had not gone to extremes of teetotalism. He bought bottles of beer when the spirit moved him thirstily, and brought them up to the room in the hotel, where Luke and his wife helped him make away with this comparatively mild beverage. Bill himself confided to Luke that there was no sense in a man hankering after excitement of that sort when he had a wife to look after, and a stake to make so that they could have a home of their own.

Luke purchased harness and a wagon. Bill took up his task. They put on a capacity load of assorted supplies, and hit the south trail. The stableman divulged an item of news as Luke swung across his buckskin to follow the wagon.

"There was a feller hired a team from me yestiddy," said he, "to go to your camp. Got a spring wagon. Told me he was goin' to haul a sick man out there. Said he'd get somebody to bring the rig back. You hustle 'em in, will yuh, Freeman? I need that there team an' rig."

"All right," Luke returned.

A sick man? He looked for a mining engineer any day. But a sick man bound for his camp. He wondered if it would be Graves—and why.

And it was indeed Graves. But that alone would not have served to disturb Luke, so long as Graves minded his own business, if Dorothy Fair had not been unexpectedly present. He took a short cut over Claybank Slide, and rode into the camp far ahead of the wagon, which must, of necessity, crawl around through the hills beyond Horsethief Crossing. Passing within a few rods of the Graves cabin, he saw her standing in the doorway. Recognition made Luke sit a trifle stiffer in his saddle, his lips drawn close. He had not been prepared for that. Yet there she stood, the sunbeams, shooting through ragged clefts in the western mountain range, striking gleams of yellow among her tawny hair.

At the Blake quarters he found a big man in khaki sucking a brier pipe, with his back against the log front of the house.

"Mr. Freeman?" he interrogated, as Luke swung down and stripped the saddle off Buck.

"That's me," Luke responded briefly.

"My name's Hall," said the stranger. "Mining engineer. Kenworthy asked me to look over this property. Made myself at home, you see."

"That's right," Luke told him. "We're not very well organized yet, but we'll give you the best we've got. By the way, was it you brought out a sick man?"

Hall nodded.

"Bob Graves," said he. "He is sick, too. All gone to pieces. Nervous as an old woman. Ran across him and his sister on the way down to Harlem. We came out together."

"Oh, I see," Luke murmured. "Where is he—over at his own place?"

"Yes," Hall returned. "They took possession, seeing your men were living here."

"I see," Luke repeated mechanically. "Well, I guess I'll have to rustle somethin' to eat for the bunch."

He found a fire going in the stove. Then, in view of the number of mouths to be fed, he impressed Hickey—who was a fair camp cook—into temporary service. The wagon would not be in for an hour and a half. Long before that supper was ready, and Luke, whose mind, to his great irritation, dwelt unceasingly on the girl over there with a nerve-shattered man, remembered that they had left the cabin bare of dishes and food. So he sent Hickey over to tell them that supper was ready.

Dorothy came back with the miner. Luke, standing before the Blake house,

nerved himself to meet her. He would gladly have dodged the meeting, but he could not dodge with a good grace. He would have to see her come and go a good many times in the ensuing days, he reflected. He wondered curiously if it were as embarrassing, as disagreeable, for her. Still he supposed not—or she would never have come to the mine. Probably she troubled herself little about him or his feelings. A mere mistaken conclusion didn't mean much to a woman, he told himself ironically. But he squirmed when he recalled it—the sting of her words and attitude. For a second he almost hated her.

And then she was within six feet of him, a bit heightened in color, a little graver than usual. Luke met her gaze unmoved—outwardly. A ghost of a smile flitted across her face.

"How do you do, Mr. Freeman?" she said.

Luke lifted his hat dumbly. And when she passed him with a swift, sidelong glance, he walked slowly and deliberately across to the shaft mouth and sat down on a rock. The fingers that straightened out a crumpled cigarette paper shook a little. And Luke laughed mirthlessly, a dry cackle.

"I'm a fine softhead, I am," he whispered scornfully.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNWARRANTED (?) CONCLUSION.

Luke kept his moods and resentments strictly in the background during the days that followed. He established an orderly routine in the camp. Mrs. Bill Smith solved the domestic problems in a wholly capable manner, with a certain amount of voluntary assistance from Dorothy Fair. The menu was nowise elaborate, to be sure, but she made the most of the material at hand, and the food she served was a vast improvement over Luke's rough-and-ready cookery. He kept his eight miners occupied. Bill he sent out with a load of ore, and the livery rig. Hall pursued his work with leisurely thoroughness. He spent a good part of his time tracing out rock formations all over the group of claims and beyond. That done, he went through the long Blake tunnel, tapping loose with a little hammer specimens off the lode. He garnered a great number of these in two sacks, not forgetting sundry lumps from the lead in Graves' prospect hole and certain outcroppings. When he spoke of his work it was in language at once terse and highly technical. And as often as not Dorothy Fair accompanied him on these seemingly dilatory tasks. When evening came Hall sometimes spent an hour or so at their camp.

Luke saw Dorothy more or less. Three times a day she sat at table on Hall's right elbow, three places distant from Luke, and trudged back to the cabin afterward, bearing her brother's meal on a tray fashioned from a wide board. Outside of meal hours Luke avoided her, whenever he could do so without open rudeness. But she stopped him once on the path. She had something to say, something that was seemingly not easy of utterance.

"Mr. Freeman," she said hesitatingly, "I—I dare say you think I was perfectly horrid. Can't you——"

Luke's unruly tongue got away from him. He had brooded too much.

"No," he interrupted bluntly. "I didn't think about you at all. Why should I? What's it to me?"

The gleam in his eyes might have belied his words if he had tarried. But he went on hurriedly, without looking back, stricken with compunction for his speech.

"Darn it!" he growled. "I didn't mean to talk like that. I'm a bonehead clear through. Hang it, I don't want to talk about it, an' she ought to know I don't. All I want is to forget it."

Which was by no means all that he

wanted, only that he was following the usual masculine tendency to delude himself wherever a woman is concerned or his pride touched. He knew that was no way to meet a tentative flag of truce. After that, however, Miss Fair met him on his own ground. Which is to say, she observed the conventional courtesies when they met, and nothing more.

He did not see, much less encounter, Graves for a time. Not until one day when he had been out in the hills with his rifle on a vain search for a deer to supply fresh meat in the camp. Homeward bound he came out beyond the main camp so that to reach it he must pass near the little cabin. Graves was sitting outside, his back against the trunk of a bull pine, elbows on his knees, his face hanging dejectedly between his palms. He looked up as Luke came abreast. Luke halted momentarily at the misery of that haggard countenance. Then he moved on.

"For Heaven's sake stop and talk to a fellow," Graves broke out petulantly. "I've just about got the jimjams again."

"I didn't know as you'd want to talk to me," Luke answered dryly. "The last time we had any conversation it wasn't what you'd call a sociable affair."

Graves made an impatient gesture with his hands.

"Oh, forget that," he said quickly. "Sometimes a man jumps to conclusions that he shouldn't. I didn't know how things stood, and I wasn't in a mental condition to wait for explanations. All the exact information I had was that Doll and Kenworthy had sent a man who looked like me on a rush order to get that work done. After I straightened up partly, in Helena, and heard from the coast, I dimly remembered being with you on the train. I came on to Benton expecting you to show up and certify to the assessment work. When I went into the office and found a relocation of the claim in your name, I took it that you'd simply made the most of your opportunity—most men would. I just naturally rose up and pawed the air. I knew I'd lost a chance for a stake. Then I took a drink or two, and when I came on you in the hotel I was seeing everything crooked and red. I owe you an apology—but what's the use? Anyway, you had the satisfaction of landing on me good and hard. I don't mind that. I had it coming. Personally I'd like to shake hands and call it square."

Luke grinned and caught his outstretched hand.

"Why, sure," said he. "You were kinda hasty, an' it cut pretty after the deal I'd had. But a man will make mistakes."

Over by the home camp Luke had a glimpse of Dorothy and Hall climbing the hill above the shaft. He sat down on the log facing Graves, and rolled himself a cigarette.

"Lord, I've been going a fierce gait lately! Slipping downhill and knowing it, and not being able to stop," Graves sighed. "This thing was gone if you hadn't stepped into the breach. I'm all shot to pieces with whisky. And I'm choking for the damned stuff right now, after it's nearly killed me. Did you ever ride in a desert country, when it was hot, till your lips were cracking, without a sign of water. And you couldn't think about anything but water, and what you'd give for one great big gulp of it?"

"Have I?" Luke echoed. "Many's the time."

"Then you have some idea how I feel," Graves declared. "It's a hard thing to fight—and I've got to fight it out this time, or lose my grip altogether, I guess. I've put everybody in wrong, myself included. If I have to go on that way, I'd rather be planted for keeps. I'm so weak and shaky a ten-year-old kid could hold me down. And I've broke Doll and squandered close

on a thousand dollars of borrowed money, and acted the blackleg generally. All because I couldn't leave the blamed stuff alone. And yet I keep on craving it. Ugh!"

"Oh, you'll get straightened up pretty soon," Luke encouraged. "When you get so you can eat a square meal and work at somethin', you won't think about whisky. I don't know of any better place for a man to get in shape, either mentally or physically, than right here."

"That's right enough. In fact, that's why I headed for here," Graves nodded. "I told sis it was the mountains for me, if I were to get my system clear of this infernal craving. But it's a hard pull, I want to tell you. She's a dead-game little sport, that sister of mine. She made me promise faithful that I wouldn't leave the mountains for three months."

"You'll be laughin' at this long before that time's up," Luke prophesied.

"You don't know me," Graves murmured. "I need a guardian. Oh, I'll stick the three months, all right. If I can't keep a promise like that, I ought to be shot. And if I ever feel the craving for a big jag coming on again, I'll hurry to a sanitarium and take the Keeley cure or something."

Luke turned the conversation into other channels to get Graves' mind off that obsessing subject. They conversed a while on mines, the range, and kindred topics. Until at length Luke descried Miss Dorothy Fair and Hall bearing down toward the cabin from the hillside. Then he departed a trifle hastily for his own quarters.

That evening Hall came back from a call at the Graves' cabin, and joined Luke on a log by the door. Dusk was creeping in. Back of the mine the mountains stood out black and towering against a saffron sky. The plains below were already a blur.

"Well, I'm through," Hall announced, after he had filled his pipe. "I'd like to pull for the railroad to-morrow."

They had discussed that move before, in the event of Bill Smith's nonreturn.

"All right," said Luke. "I'll help you pack Crow in the mornin'. He leads fine. I don't think you'll have any trouble with Buck. He's kinda gay, but not mean."

At six in the morning Luke tied the last hitch over the burden of ore samples on Crow's back. Then they shook hands, and the mining engineer swung up on the buckskin.

"So long," he said.

"So long," Hall returned. "Hope we run across each other again, some time."

Luke went inside and took down his rifle. He had meant to be abroad in the hills at daybreak, after the elusive venison the camp needed. A late start was better than none, though he stood a far better chance of finding deer on the move at the bare peep of day. When he stepped out of the house he observed that Hall had ridden over to the Graves' cabin.

"Biddin' 'em a fond farewell, I suppose," Luke said peevishly to himself, and struck out for a ridge to the north.

Now it happened that on his way to this particular ridge he picked up a track—a hot track, as a hunter would say; a broad-toed, fresh hoofprint, denoting a big buck. This he followed. It had been made that morning, he judged, and since the season was that in which the buck deer manifested a tendency to make their beds under a tree in fairly open ground he stood a fair chance of jumping this one out of his morning nap. The track meandered along, and finally struck a height of land which carried Luke out above the top of Claybank Slide. The inconsequent wandering of the beast brought his trail presently to the brink of the big land slip. Luke stepped to the edge and glanced over. There was always the

chance of a deer nosing about just such a place, and a good hunter overlooks no opportunity.

He saw no deer, but he did see Hall—which was not unexpected—and Dorothy Fair, which was both unexpected and irritating, under the circumstances. Hall was walking, leading Buck, with Crow ambling sedately behind under his burden. Dorothy stepped along in the narrow trail ahead of the engineer. They were well across the Slide.

Luke leaned on his rifle, watching, an unpleasant twist to his mouth. The two below stopped on the open hillside just off the Slide, and stood talking earnestly. Luke drew back. A matter of twenty yards or so he walked slowly, a queer feeling rising in his throat. Then he took out his purse, extracted the gold locket with its dangling chain, and flung it with all his strength—and a profane expletive—out over the rim of Claybank Slide.

He was sorry almost instantly. The act was so utterly childish. It shamed him. And so in hot rebellion at things as they were, he took up the deer trail once more. But a man cannot hunt successfully without a mind wholly intent on the business in hand. Luke followed the buck's track without his usual care and watchfulness, perfunctorily almost. Wherefore, the deer rose silently, got him behind a bush, allowed Mr. Freeman to walk squarely up to his still warm bed. Then, while Luke's faculties were squaring themselves rather slowly to the situation, he gave a derisive snort, crossed a narrow backbone in two bounds, and went *chug—chug—chug* down through a long stretch of sheltering brush.

"Good-by," Luke called sardonically after him. Then he dropped downhill a little farther on, struck the Claybank trail, and turned home, highly disgruntled with everything, himself included.

His feet were incased in moccasins. On the padded clay and sand of the trail he made absolutely no sound. So it befell that he came out past the end of the rock ledge where Halvorsen's bullet had sent Buck rolling down—and came slap upon Dorothy Fair sitting on a rock, crying.

He was within four feet of her, and she had not heard him. The convulsive heave of her shoulders wrung Luke's heart. He moved quietly up to her, fearful lest some hurt had befallen.

"What's the matter?" he demanded anxiously.

She looked at him, startled. One hand drew up against her heaving breast.

"N-nothing," she said.

This was manifestly untrue, and Luke stared in puzzled anxiety. Miss Fair dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief clutched in one hand. And Luke, eying her, saw something in the other that made his pulse quicken—a bit of gold chain hanging down. He cast a swift glance upward. Surely—there was the dead stub of a pine by which he had stood.

He reached down and caught the small white fingers, and rudely bent them open. The locket dropped—Miss Fair making an ineffectual effort to grasp it. Then she glared up at him out of wet and shiny eyes, which immediately fell before his intent stare.

"Y-you take t-too great l-liberties—with me, Mr. F-Freeman," she protested.

Luke dropped on one knee beside her, and took her by the shoulders, turning her so that she faced him in spite of herself.

"Do you care anything about me, or not?" he asked slowly. "Tell me yes or no."

"I t-tried to tell you I was s-sorry a w-while ago," she sobbed. "But you g-got on your high horse at once. And n-now you go and th-throw away my locket. I——"

But Luke gathered her into his arms

and so smothered the rest of that sentence.

Afterward, when Miss Dorothy Fair had recovered her normal fluency of speech, they poked along toward home, wrangling playfully as to which should retain possession of the locket. Having got her, Luke had forgotten all about the gold trinket, and Dorothy had rescued it from the trail herself.

"I'm a jealous beggar, and I can't help it," Luke admitted. "How did I know Hall was an old an' privileged friend uh yours? That locket belongs to me. You gave it to me. I'll steal it if I can't get it any other way."

Thus they went on, as light-heartedly as a pair of children. The locket dispute settled at last by Luke forcibly possessing himself of it, they found a shady place in sight of the mine, and sat down.

"There's old Bill Smith, see?" Luke descried the wagon from afar, and pointed it out to her.

"Let's go on in," Dorothy suggested. "There should be some mail. Mr. Kenworthy was to send a legal partnership agreement for you and I and Bob to sign. And a power of attorney enabling him to act as our business representative."

"Why should I sign?" Luke inquired. "I don't own nothin' here."

"Oh, yes, you do," Dorothy laughed. "You own a fourth interest, the same as Bob, Mr. Kenworthy, and myself."

"Uh-uh," Luke demurred. "I'm drawin' wages, good pay at that, for all I do. I don't want any presents—except you."

"Now, please, Luke," she begged prettily. "Mr. Kenworthy suggested that you might take that high-and-mighty stand. And I'm supposed to make you see the error of your ways. It isn't any more than fair. You took all sorts of chances. If you hadn't succeeded, Bob and I would have been a fine poverty-stricken pair, and Mr. Kenworthy considerably out of pocket, too. It isn't *giving* you anything, as you put it. If you grubstake a prospector you share in whatever he finds. You're entitled to a good deal more than a fourth interest. If you demanded a half interest for what you did, neither Bob nor Mr. Kenworthy would stutter about it. Please, Luke, don't be pig-headed. I won't like you if you are."

"Oh, all right," Luke gave in. "I can use the money, all right, all right."

They moved on a little farther. Bill Smith's Mary was hurrying up the long slope to meet her man on the big wagon.

"Look at her," Luke grinned. "There's a loving wife for yuh. Did yuh ever hear how they come to get married? Gee, but it was sudden. Bill and I blew into Seattle the same night I ran across you. They were married the next day."

"Yes, Mary told me," Dorothy returned. "Wasn't it splendid—the way it turned out. They're two simple souls who rushed headlong into happiness. But it's been almost as unreal with us, Luke. Didn't you kiss me within an hour after we first laid eyes on each other? It seemed absolutely unreal the next day. Then I'd go over the whole thing, from the time you knocked down the policeman till you kissed me and put me on the car, and I'd wonder if I'd ever see you again. I wondered if you'd try to locate me through that locket. I didn't have any clear idea why I slipped that locket into your coat—except that I wanted you to have something of mine. It was just an impulse. I'd never met anybody quite like you. You played the game with all your heart, and didn't even ask my name."

"I wanted to bad enough," Luke smiled reminiscently. "Remember when we got out uh that house and walked along arm in arm? I kept thinkin' all the time that I'd like to have yuh belong there. But yuh made it plain, when we

got out on Second Avenue, that you wanted to take your own trail. That settled it, as far as I was concerned. I wouldn't force myself on anybody."

"Some men—a good many that I've encountered, in fact—would have been inclined to trade on such exploits as you got away with that night," she returned. "You took that part as a matter of course. That was one thing that made me admire you. And you were so awfully nice to me, and dignified, even the way you kissed me."

They both laughed at the recollection.

"Well," Luke said, after a brief silence, "I have thought in the last three weeks that I was up against as hard a formation as I ever bumped into. Things looked pretty cloudy to me after that jolt you handed me when I went back to Seattle burstin' with good news. I was beginnin' to think old man Trouble had come to stay with me for a spell. And here it is all lovely—me part owner in a rich mine, an' goin' to marry the finest girl in the land."

"'When Fortune means to men most good, she looks upon them with a threatening eye,'" Dorothy quoted airily. "That's some of Shakespeare's wisdom," she explained.

"Shakespeare, eh," Luke observed. "I saw the 'Merry Wives of Windsor' played once. About a fat old feller name uh Falstaff that got into heaps uh trouble from gettin' gay with the ladies. What was that again?"

Dorothy repeated the line.

"That was what ailed me all the time, and I didn't know it," Luke nodded. "The threatenin' eye of fortune."

TOO MUCH GEORGIA

REPRESENTATIVE TOM HEFLIN, of Alabama, known by some as "Handsome," and admitted by all to be the greatest stump speaker in the South, was scheduled for a speech in Birmingham, Alabama, the Saturday night before the primary which decided whether Underwood or Hobson was to be the next senator from Alabama. Heflin was championing Underwood. During the afternoon the friends of Hobson had placarded the streets and buildings of the city with signs and banners bearing this inscription:

"Hoke Smith, with a service of two years in the Senate, was successful in securing a regional bank for the city of Atlanta, Georgia. Oscar Underwood, with a service of twenty years in the House, failed to secure a regional bank for Birmingham, Alabama. What's the answer?"

That night Heflin, unmindful of the placards, was making a marvelous speech, explaining all the good points in Underwood's record. His delivery was perfect. He went from humor to sadness, from grave to gay, and he alternated between high flight of oratory and bursts of low comedy. He had the crowd going strong.

Right in the middle of one of his greatest efforts a man in the audience cried out in a shrill voice:

"Say, why didn't Oscar get a regional bank for Birmingham if Hoke got one for Atlanta?"

Heflin did not hesitate a moment. Leveling a revolverlike finger toward his questioner, he said:

"My friend, President Wilson practiced law when a young man in Georgia. Hoke Smith is a Georgia man. Secretary McAdoo of the treasury is the boss of the bank business. President Wilson married a Georgia girl. Mr. McAdoo is going to marry Miss Wilson, whose mother was a Georgia girl, and whose father practiced law in Georgia. How in thunder could Oscar go against a combination like that?"

The Fabric of a Dream

By Joseph C. Lincoln

Author of "Cap'n Eri," "Partners of the Tide," "The Depot Master," Etc.

Give a rouse for Joe Lincoln who to-day joins our circle of good fellows. He has been winning success as a story-teller and he is going to spin a series of yarns for our entertainment. This is the first. Sixteen years ago his first stories appeared in *Ainslee's Magazine*, and since the appearance of his first book, "Cap'n Eri," his fame has been growing. Probably no living writer understands the Yankee sailor character as well as he does. He comes from Cape Cod; was born there, and goes there every summer; lives among these people; is one of them himself; and has appropriated for himself a perfect mine of characteristic Yankee humor that is like nothing else in the United States. If there is any use in making comparisons, he might very justly be called the W. W. Jacobs of America. What Jacobs did for the alongshore sailorman of Old England Joe Lincoln is doing for his prototype in New England.

THEY wan't any account, the whole three of 'em. If you'd shook 'em up together and run 'em through a sieve you wouldn't have got morals enough to last one of them summer golf fellers through a Sunday game. There was Julius Sparrow, Washy Sparrow's brother, and everybody on Cape Cod knows what that family amounts to; and there was old Jonah Barber, who hailed from Marblehead in the beginnin', but hadn't been back home for fifteen years, havin' reasons; and, last but not least, when it came to all-round no-accountness, there was a Britisher, name of Harry Edwards—" 'Arry Hedwards," he called it —who was always braggin' about Liverpool, but never went ashore there until 'twas too dark for the police to see plain. All seafarin' men afore the mast, they was, and a high old lot, or my name ain't Barzilla Wingate.

This thing I'm goin' to tell you about happened away back in the after end of the sixties, and the place it happened in was Portland, Maine. The ship they'd been aboard of had touched there on the way home from Havre to New York, and the skipper had put them ashore after givin' 'em what was left of their wages. The mate gave each of 'em a partin' kick, and the rest of the crew gave three cheers.

They put up at a seaman's boardin' house down by the docks, and for the first week or so, while their money held out, they had a real lively time. But now the last cent of the money was gone, and they was sittin' in their bedroom—or, rather, Julius' and Edwards' bedroom, for Jonah slept in a kind of overgrown closet openin' off it—holdin' ship's counsel and tryin' to decide what to do next. 'Twas noon, and, though they'd had a mite of breakfast, thanks to Jonah's last quarter, there wan't any prospect of dinner.

'Twas the time for suggestions, but old Jonah was the only one that had

offered anything anyways definite so fur, and what he'd offered wan't definite enough to hurt. He was the biggest yarn spinner on record, and when it came to decidin' between the truth and t'other thing he never hesitated a second. He'd seen mermaids and sea serpents enough to stock a museum, and he never saw one through the small end of the telescope, neither.

But his pet notion, and the one he talked about most, was that every female was in love with him. You'd think every time he run afoul of a lookin'-glass 'twould have cured him of that disease; but no, he was dead set on it. 'Cordin' to his tell, there wan't a port from Shanghai to New Orleans without a lone woman settin' up nights cryin' because he was riskin' his precious life furlin' tops'ls on the high seas. Nobody but he himself took a mite of stock in his love stories, but he kept on tellin' 'em just the same.

"Well, mates," he says, "you can laugh if you want to, but it's a fact. There's a widow—a nice, smart, good-lookin' one, too—right here in this town that would help us out with a square meal and me with a loan of five dollars if I went and asked her."

Edwards, who was sittin' by the window, in the only chair in the room, grunted disdainful. Julius, who was roostin' on the bed, laughed again. Old Jonah, who was sittin' cross-legged on the floor because 'twas the only place the others would let him sit, looked at 'im sad and reprovin'.

"That's it," he says, shakin' his head, "you don't believe it, of course. Anybody'd think I was old enough to have my statements respected, but——"

Julius cut in afore he was finished.

"Oh, we respect 'em, all right," he says. "Old Ananias, the feller I used to hear about in Sunday school, would get down on his knees afore one of them statements of yours, Jonah—any time, he would."

This was a kind of compliment, in a way, but Jonah didn't seem to appreciate it. He bristled up consider'ble.

"Is that so!" he says. "What would you say now if I marched out of this room and come back with a five-dollar bill in my pocket? Hey? What would you say?"

"I wouldn't say nothin'," answered Edwards, from the window. "I'd lock the door and be ready to 'ide under the bed when the police come. Look 'ere! Jule and me 'ave 'eard about these widows and girls of yours till we're fair sick. You're always bleatin' about 'em like a silly old sheep, but that's all you do—bleat. You never go to see one of 'em, and one of 'em never comes to see you. They're halways dead in love with you, and ready to feed you and give you money, but—they don't. Where are they? That's what I say, where are they? 'Oo is this widow? What's 'er name? Where does she live? 'Ey? Out with it now! Where does she live?"

"In the blind asylum," says Julius, laughin'.

"I know where she lives, all right," snaps Jonah. "I know where she lives, all right."

"Then w'y don't you go and see 'er instead of sittin' 'ere bleatin' about it?"

Jonah got up off the floor. For a minute they thought he was really goin', but he didn't. He just stood and pulled his whiskers and looked troubled.

"Well, mates," he says, "I tell you; it's like this: If I go to see her, she'll want to marry me, and—— Here, you" —turning savage on Julius, who was holdin' his hand over his mouth—"what are you grinnin' at now? You ought to take somethin' for that face of yours; it's stretchin' all out of shape."

"Never mind," says Julius, "it'll come right after you're gone. It ain't the blind asylum, Harry; it's the other

kind. Go on, Jonah, go on! I wouldn't have you stop now for nothin'."

So, after glarin' at him a spell longer, Jonah went on. He said that he and the widow had got acquainted a year afore, when he was aboard the brigantine *Pollock,* carryin' lumber between Portland and Providence. They got to be real friendly, and he'd stop in any time, when the *Pollock* was in dock, and have dinner or supper.

"She's a fine woman," he says. "You'd say so, too, if you see her. Good-hearted and generous, and——"

"Aw, belay!" interrupted Edwards, impatient. "We've 'eard all that before."

"And the way she can cook!" went on Jonah, payin' no attention. "Such corned beef and cabbage! And riz biscuits, hot and steamin! And plum duff! And——"

Julius' mouth was waterin' so he couldn't speak, and Edwards was fairly chokin'.

"Shut up!" he hollers, jumpin' out of the chair and wavin' his fists. "If you talk any more like that, I'll kill you, and —and eat you afterward. Go and see 'er, and be quick about it!"

"But—but I can't, mates. I can't. I don't dast to. You see, er—well, she and me are—are sort of engaged, as you might say."

Julius roared again, and even Edwards had to grin.

"Hengaged?" he says. "That's an old yarn, that is. Why, you was hengaged to that girl in Rio, and the mulatto woman in Jamaica, and the French cook at——"

"I know, I know. I can't help it. I don't mean to, but they won't let me alone, the womenfolks won't. All I mean is just to be friendly and sociable, and, afore I know it, they're talkin' about marryin', and what a good husband a seafarin' man makes, and—and the fust thing I know they up and say we're engaged. It's been that way ever since I was nineteen year old. I've got a way with women, I have. I don't take no pride in it. It just seems to come natural. Why, there's ports I don't dast to go ashore in, scarcely. One time in Cape Town, I——"

"We've heard that, too," says Julius, prompt. "We know all about that. But look here! Why don't you get married? If this widow you're braggin' about is such a wonder, and good, and fine lookin', and all, why don't you marry her, and settle down? Me and Harry'll come to the weddin' supper, won't we, Harry?"

Edwards said he'd bet they would. But Jonah kept on lookin' dubious.

"I can't," he says; "'tain't no use. I can't support a wife, and this one she can't support me. She's got just enough to scrape along on, takin' in sewin' and such. If she was rich—if she had a couple of thousand or so put by, I'd do it in a minute. But she ain't; she's poor—poor, but proud as the sayin' is. No, mates, 'twouldn't be right—'twouldn't be fair to me. I'll have to give it up, I cal'late."

But Edwards wouldn't let him give it up. He said the very least Jonah could do was to go and borrer the five dollars or get 'em invited to dinner or somethin'. Julius said the same thing, and they was both so ugly about it that, at last, Jonah got mad and stamped out, slammin' the door after him.

When he was gone, the other two set and looked at each other, too cross-grained and discouraged to talk. By and by Julius said:

"It's no use," he says, "we'll have to be huntin' round for a berth aboard some craft or other. We can't stay here and starve. Besides, the feller that owns this place'll want his room rent in another day or so, and we'll be put out in the street."

Edwards reached down into his trousers pocket, and took out a pink slip of pasteboard.

"You're forgettin' that, ain't you?" he says. "That's what's goin' to fetch us in the shiners."

'Twas a ticket in "The Seamen's Lucky Fortune Society," a kind of one-horse lottery that was run in Portland at that time. The law wan't nigh so strict against lotteries in them days, and some fellers had run this one, with drawin's every three months, for a long spell. About every sailor that got ashore there spent a dollar for a ticket, and Julius and Edwards and Jonah had bought theirs the day they left the ship. Those lottery tickets, and the clothes they was wearin', was all they had left.

"Number 382," says Edwards, readin' from the ticket. "Them's the lucky figures that's goin' to make me rich."

"You?" says Julius, suspicious. "Us, you mean. The agreement was we'd share, and share alike."

Edwards appeared to have forgot it; but he answered prompt enough.

"Oh, yes," he says, "hof course! We'll share. You trust your mate, 'Arry. He's square, 'e is."

"He'd better be. But, see here, a body'd think you'd won the prize already to hear you talk. Ain't I got 320 in that lottery myself? And ain't Jonah got 416? Why not him or me? Or somebody else? That's the most likely thing, the way our luck's runnin' now."

"No, it ain't. Didn't I find that 'orseshoe day afore yesterday?"

"You did. And didn't you smash a window, tryin' to heave it at a mark, and pretty nigh get us took up? We would have been, if Jonah hadn't had enough left to pay for the window."

"What of it? We wasn't took in charge, was we? And ain't findin' a 'orseshoe the best sign of good luck? And 'ow about that dream of mine, the one I've 'ad three nights runnin'? I tell you, I see myself, in that dream, sittin' at a window, all dressed up in gay colors—silk and satins and such—a reg'lar royal robe it was—a-waitin' for some feller that 'ad gone to fetch me money?"

"How do you know he'd gone to fetch you money?"

"'Cause I know, I tell you. It came to me in the dream. I knew it, that's all. Ho, you trust your mate, 'Arry, 'im and 'is luck! It's been a long time comin', but it's comin' now, and—— 'Oo's that at the door?"

'Twas the landlord's boy, and he come in, grinnin'.

"Here's some letters for you," he says, handin' Julius three envelopes. "A feller left 'em at the bar downstairs. They're the lists of the winners in the Lucky Fortune, I shouldn't wonder. Let's see if you've won a prize. Dad ain't."

Edwards made a jump and a grab for the envelopes, but Julius pushed him away.

"Here," he says to the boy, "you clear out. What do you mean by hangin' around waitin' to see what ain't none of your business? Clear out, do you hear!"

The boy went as far as the door, and then stuck his head back in again.

"Dad says if you ain't won nothin' he's goin' to put you out," he called. "Dad says you're dead beats."

"Clear out!" roars Julius, jumpin' for him.

The boy slammed the door just in time, and went downstairs hollerin: "Beats! Dead beats!" at the top of his lungs.

Julius and Edwards was so excited they couldn't hardly steady their fingers enough to tear open the envelopes, but they done it finally. Inside of each was the list of Lucky Fortune winners, printed in black, battered-up type letters on a cheap hand press. They commenced to spell out the numbers.

"Number 320 ain't here," groans Julius. "'Course *I* wouldn't win nothin'! No, and 382 ain't here, neither.

Huh! That's what's your horseshoe amounted to! And your everlastin' dream! How about that money somebody had gone to fetch? And about them r'yal robes? And—— What's the matter with you now?"

Edwards was holdin' the list under his nose with one hand, and p'intin' at it with a finger that shook like a slack sheet in a gale.

"Look!" he gasps. "For 'Eaven sakes, look!"

"Look where?"

"Where my finger is. Where I'm pointin'."

"Your finger's all over the chart. Keep it still, can't you! I—— *Hey!* Good land of love!"

For there, up nigh the head of the list, was the number 416, and opposite to it the words: Second prize, $1,200."

They looked at each other.

"Jonah's number!" gasps Julius. "Old Jonah's won twelve hundred dollars!"

For as much as a minute they set on the bed, paralyzed, as you might say. Then Julius got up and commenced to dance round the room. Edwards didn't dance, though; he kept starin' at the list, and there was a queer, ugly look in his eyes.

"Hooray!" whoops Julius, doin' the hornpipe and grand cachuky back and forth over the bare floor. "Hooray!"

"Umph!" grunted Edwards. "'Ooray, eh? What is there to 'ooray about?"

Julius stopped dancin'. "What is there?" he began. "Why, mate, you're loony! There's twelve hundred good Uncle Sam dollars, that's what! Jonah's drawed it, and it's goin' to be share and share alike. Whoop-ee!"

But Edwards didn't whoop! The look in his eye got queerer than ever, and he scowled somethin' frightful.

"You're sure of that, are you?" he asks, sarcastic.

"Sure of what?"

"That it's goin' to be share and share alike. 'E's got the ticket, ain't he? We ain't got it."

Julius' nineteenth whoop broke off in the middle. His feet came down hard on the floor, and he began to look queer.

"Why—why," he stammers, "it's—it's—of course, he's got the ticket, but—but—why, he was the one that first said we'd go shares!"

"Ye-es, I know. But we didn't agree to it, did we?"

"Yes, we did. Or I did, and you—— Say, good land! You don't s'pose he'll try to hog the whole thing? If he does——"

"What could we do? Nothin'. But that's all right, matey; that's all right. *'E don't know 'e's won yet.*"

Julius stared at him, and he stared back.

"'E don't know he's won yet," says Edwards again. "What's to 'inder us gettin' that ticket away from 'im when he comes back? *When* we get it, then we can go shares—if we want to."

"But the lists?"

"We can tear 'em up and 'ide 'em, can't we? Mate, are you goin' to let that selfish, greedy old 'og make a fool of you? 'E's cheated me out of what was mine by rights, what the dream as much as said was mine. Number 416 'ad ought to 'ave been my ticket. 'E got it, but 'e don't know it's worth anything. Matey, you listen to me."

Fust off Julius wouldn't listen. He said old Jonah had been square enough, and he wasn't goin' to steal from him. But Edwards kept talkin', and by and by Julius commences to see that Jonah had been kind of selfish, or might be if he got the chance, or somethin'. And at last he agreed they'd keep mum about the twelve-hundred prize and try to get hold of the ticket. Then he said they could go shares. Edwards started to say somethin' else, but he changed his mind.

"But, look here, Harry," says Julius, "s'pose Jonah's gone to see that widow,

and she asks us to dinner and the like of that. I'd feel sort of mean, takin' grub that come through kindness of a feller I was tryin' to swindle."

"Swindle! Why, blow me, mate! It ain't swindling. We're just goin' to make sure *we* ain't swindled, that's all. And, as for that widow—bah! There ain't any widow. She's only another of the old chap's lies, that's all she is. You'll see."

And, sure enough, when Jonah did come back, he said he'd been up to the widow's house and she wan't in; had gone out somewheres. Edwards winked at Julius, and Julius winked back. Then they set about tryin' to get hold of that ticket.

They tried all the rest of that afternoon, and away into the evenin'; but 'twas no use—the old feller simply wouldn't give it up. Julius pretended he'd forgotten the number, and wanted to borrow it to copy, but Jonah said he remembered it, all right, and told it, so that game didn't work. Then Edwards said he wanted to borrow both their tickets for a little while, because, although his dream had made him sartin he was goin' to win, everybody knew to borrer somethin' fetched good luck.

"You remember the poetry, Jonah," he says:

"Somethin' old and somethin' new,
Somethin' borrered and somethin' blue——

"And my shirt's blue, now as we come to think of it, eh, mates?" he says.

"So's your nose, for that matter," says Jonah, who didn't seem to be in the best of humor. "If borrerin' things'll fetch good luck, you've borrered enough money of me to load a schooner already. No; I'll keep my own ticket. I'm goin' to bed."

The other two was mad enough to have took the ticket by main strength, but Jonah was pretty husky, in spite of his age, and, besides, they wan't popular enough to risk raisin' a row in that boardin' house. So they jest set and glared after the old feller when he went to his own room and turned in. They knew the ticket was in one of his pockets, and they set up a spell, hopin' to sneak in and search his clothes; but 'twas no go, he was a light sleeper, and the boards in the floor creaked somethin' terrible.

So at last they turned in, too, and Julius dropped off to sleep. He was woke up by a yell, a reg'lar howl, right in his starboard ear.

"Fire!" yells Edwards. "Fire! Turn out, all hands! *Fire!*"

Julius jumped out of bed, fetchin' the blanket with him. His eyes was half shut, but they was open enough to see a bright blaze in the corner behind the washstand.

"Fire!" says Edwards again. "We've got to escape, or we'll be burned to death. Quick!"

He grabbed Julius by the arm, and run him out into the hall just as Jonah come racin' into the room.

"Stay where you are, mate," whispers Edwards to Julius, fierce, and sharp. "It's all right! I know what I'm up to."

He run back into the room again, where old Jonah was tremblin' around, half awake, and singin' out for water. Julius, too upset and scared to move, stayed in the pitch-dark hall and shivered. A moment later out bounces Edwards again and grabs his arm.

"Come!" he whispers, quick. "Come on! Down the stairs with you! The landlord and 'is gang'll be 'ere directly. Come on, I tell you!"

He fairly dragged poor Julius down the stairs to the front door. The key was in the lock, lucky for them, and Edwards got the door open and they run out into the street. 'Twas past one o'clock, and there wasn't a soul in sight.

"Run!" says Edwards. "Run for your life!"

He began to run, and Julius, not knowin' what else to do, run after him.

'Twas November, and the cold wind, blowin' down the empty street, was like a paper of needles—especially to Julius, who had left the bulk of his clothes upstairs in the room.

"Hi!" he sung out, after they'd run a couple of blocks. "Hi! Hold on, will you!"

"We can't 'old on, yet," pants Edwards, over his shoulder. "It ain't safe. Come on!"

He went on, and after him went Julius, barefoot, over the cobbles. But he was the better runner of the two, to say nothin' of bein' in racin' togs, and, after a spell, he caught up, and grabbed Edwards by the neck.

"Here!" he gasps, huggin' him like a brother. "Stop, you everlastin' critter! Stop!"

Edwards stopped because he had to—Julius was hangin' full weight on his shoulders—but anybody could have told he wan't anxious to stop.

"Do you want to be took in charge?" he says, tryin' to pull Julius' hands loose from his neck. "That landlord and old Barber and all the rest of 'em will 'ave us if we stay 'ere. Hi say! Let go, will you? You're chokin' me!"

Julius let go with one hand; but he held on with the other.

"Took in charge!" he managed to sputter—between shortness of breath and shivers he couldn't hardly say anything plain. "Took in charge! Why, you fool head! What do you mean by hikin' me through the streets this here way? Can't you see I ain't dressed?"

"That's all right," answers Edwards. "That's all right. I've got 'is clothes, ain't I?"

"His clothes? Whose?"

"Why, Jonah's. That's what I went back in the room for. When 'e come out to find where the fire was, I run in and scoffed 'is clothes. 'Ere they are. And the Lucky Fortune ticket's in 'em. Ho! Ho! *I* told you to trust your mate 'Arry! 'E wasn't born yesterday, 'e wasn't!"

"But the fire!"

"Fire! There wan't no fire!"

Then Edwards told him. Seems the whole thing was his doin'. He'd thought it up after Julius fell asleep. He knew if there was one thing old Jonah was scared of, 'twas fire; so he took the washbasin and put it in the corner, upset the lamp in it, and touched her off with a match. There was no danger, 'cause the fire was all in the basin. He was so full of laugh and glory at his smartness that it took him forever to spin the yarn. Julius heard about half of it, and then grabbed the clothes out of his arms, and bolted up an alley to put 'em on.

Puttin' 'em on was no short-time job. 'Twas pitch dark in the alley, and the things was all jumbled up together. Besides that, Julius was so numb with the cold that he kept droppin' 'em, and, in the middle of it, a policeman went by and they had to crouch down and keep quiet till he got out of hearin'! Julius' teeth was rattlin' so that Edwards had to stuff a handkerchief in his mouth to hush the noise, and, when Julius found fault because there was kerosene on the handkerchief, Edwards said he was the most thankless swab ever he sailed with.

"And what if there ain't only one sock?" he says. "What's a sock alongside of the money you'll 'ave to-morrer when we cash in the ticket?"

But there was a nail in the bottom of the shoe where the sock was missin', and Julius found fault about that. Then he commenced to go on because the coat wan't present.

"What's a coat?" says Edwards. "You'll be wantin' a di'mond breastpin next. I must 'ave dropped the coat when I grabbed the clothes off the chair. You're a good, 'ealthy man, ain't you? You ain't a baby. What do you want of a coat? The vest is there, 'cause I saw it. Come on!"

Julius said 'twas a mighty raw night to be cruisin' in his shirt sleeves, and he went on about Edwards' carelessness till another idea struck him.

"Yes," he says, "and what about the ticket? How do you know that ain't in the coat? Hey? How do you know?"

That fetched Edwards all of a heap, and 'twan't until they stopped under a lamp-post and located the ticket in a pocket of the vest that he felt better. Then he commenced to carry on and laugh at the way Jonah's clothes fitted Julius. You see, Jonah was six foot and weighed over two hundred, and Julius was little and shriveled up, so the vest hung down pretty nigh to his knees, and, as for the trousers—well, he had to turn up a foot or so of the bottoms of the legs afore he could navigate.

They pretty nigh had a fight afore Edwards would stop laughin', but at last he did, and then they commenced arguin' about what to do next. Edwards, who had all his own clothes on, havin' dressed afore he started the "fire," was for walkin' around until the lottery office opened in the mornin'. But it had begun to snow, and Julius, shiverin' in his shirt sleeves—or Jonah's—wouldn't hear of it.

"S'pose I'm goin' to freeze to death?" he wanted to know. "What's six hundred dollars to a frozen corpse? No, sir! I shan't stay out in this blizzard no longer. I'll go back where I started from fust."

Goin' back, of course, wan't to be considered serious, and, after a spell, Julius happened to think of a feller he used to know who was a sort of shippin' agent and got crews for vessels.

"He might trust us a room for tonight," he says, "but we'll have to be mighty careful. He'd shanghai us aboard a whaler just as quick as he'd look at us. That's the way he makes his money. We'll have to tell him we want a berth fust, and then think up some sort of lie to-morrer."

"'E won't need any lie to-morrer," says Edwards. "We'll 'ave our twelve 'undred by then. 'Eave ahead for your land-shark friend's. Seems to me you ain't very particular 'oo you 'ave for friends."

"Um—m," says Julius, lookin' at him meanin'ly, "so I've been thinkin' myself."

They found the shippin' agent's place—a reg'lar den 'twas, down by the water front, but a half mile from where they had been stoppin'—and hunted up Julius' "friend." He was pretty ugly at bein' turned out of bed at two o'clock, but he took 'em in for the night, though he wouldn't give 'em nothin' to eat unless they paid for it, which, of course, they couldn't do. There was no stove in the room, and 'twas cold as Greenland, and all the bedclothes was just a ragged blanket and a ratty old patchwork comforter, made of odds and ends, that had been what they call a "crazy quilt" once, and gay enough in its day. Now about all it had left was its craziness.

In the mornin', Edwards was for rushin' off hotfoot to the lottery office; but Julius—who had slept with the ticket under his pillow—wouldn't let him go unless he went, too, and 'twas too cold to go without a coat. So, after some more argument—they was both hungry and ugly—they agreed to draw lots to see who should wear Edwards' clothes and go, while t'other stayed and waited for him to come back. They drew straws, and Julius won; he held the straws.

So Julius got into Edwards' clothes, and Edwards got into Jonah's—what there was of 'em. Then 'twas Julius' turn to laugh, for they fitted Edwards worse than they did him. While Edwards was lookin' for somethin' to throw at him, he dodged out of the door and started for the lottery place.

When he got there he found 'twas shut up. The day was Sunday, but, naturally enough, *they* hadn't remembered that.

He hung around till noontime, hopin' somebody might come, but they didn't; so at last back he went to the shippin' agent's. Edwards was sittin' by the window, with the crazy quilt round his shoulders, waitin' for him. He was lookin', so it seemed to Julius, a good deal happier than he had in the mornin'.

But when he found out that Julius hadn't got the money, he was mad enough.

"That's what comes," he says, "of keepin' comp'ny with a bloomin' 'eathen. A decent Christian would 'ave known 'twas Sunday; but you wouldn't know a church if you laid your heyes on one. A 'eathen, that's what you are! A bloomin' Yankee 'eathen! Give me my clothes. I'm goin' hout for a breath of fresh air."

He was so cranky that Julius thought 'twould be pleasanter to pacify him; so he took off Edwards' clothes and handed 'em over. Edwards put 'em on, and then he handed Julius the trousers belongin' to Jonah.

"Where's the vest?" says Julius. "Hurry up, will you? It's colder'n Jehu in this old receivin' tomb. Where's the vest?"

Edwards was standin' in the doorway.

"Well, matey," he says, smilin' soothin'like, "you mustn't get peevish now and I'll tell you. After you was gone I was that 'ungry I near died, so I sold the vest to your friend downstairs for a bit of breakfast. 'Course, I thought 'twouldn't be no odds to you; you'd come back rollin' in money, so——"

"Breakfast! You've had breakfast! And here I am starvin' myself all along of you! Why, you——"

He jumped for him, but Edwards was halfway down the stairs. So now 'twas Julius' turn to wrap up in the crazy quilt and sit by the window. Lookin' at the lottery ticket, which he'd been mighty careful to keep, and callin' Edwards names, was all the comfort he had the rest of that day and part of the night.

'Twas near ten when Edwards showed up, and he was pretty foggy in the head when he arrived. He'd had the luck to fall in with some seafarin' fellers he knew, from a bark that had just made port, and they'd been around together ever since. He'd had supper—and other things. He didn't pay much attention to the rakin' over that Julius give him, but undressed and tumbled into bed. Julius set up a spell, long enough to give him his opinion of the way he'd acted.

"And to think," says Julius, "that I got into all this on account of your bein' such a greedy, swindlin' pig. I was willin' to let Jonah keep his ticket, and all hands go shares. But you wan't. You had to steal the whole thing. And see what it's brought us to."

"It ain't that," says Edwards, half asleep and smilin'. "It's account of our sailin' with a Jonah. Hanybody knows what a Jonah on board'll do to a feller's luck. Good night, matey. Say, 'op along with that quilt, will you! It's a bit chilly in bed 'ere."

Julius didn't sleep much that night. Edwards had two-thirds of the bed, and you might as well have tried to move an elephant as him. All he'd do was toss his arms around and smile and say: "I'll take another of the same." After three or four hours of it, Julius give up, and climbed out, dressed in Edwards' clothes, and set in the chair.

At seven o'clock Edwards was still asleep, and Julius cal'lated 'twas time to be startin' for the lottery office. He was so hungry he could have ate a pine board—if 'twas soft pine—and the thought of Edwards' sellin' that vest and eatin' breakfast off it made him madder than ever. However, he started

to go, and, just as he was tiptoein' to the door, he happened to see the trousers—all that was left of old Jonah's suit—hangin' on the chair where he, Julius, had put 'em the night afore. He stopped stock-still and looked at those trousers.

'Twas the shippin' agent that woke Edwards up. He was standin' alongside the bed, with a plate of baked beans and a cup of coffee in his hands.

"They're for you," he says. "They're your breakfast. Sparrow sent 'em to you."

"*'Oo* sent 'em?" says Edward, settin' up.

"Sparrow, your partner, of course. He told me to tell you he was goin' you know where, and that he'd be back pretty soon with what he'd gone after. Oh, yes, and he said tell you he wouldn't let a mate starve, even if you would."

"But where he'd get 'em?" says Edward, referrin' to the beans.

"Bought 'em of me. Had some himself, and then sent you these. I'm willin' to *sell* meals any time, even if I do have to take old clothes for 'em. Ha! Ha!"

"Clothes? What clothes?"

"Trousers, they was, this time."

Edwards didn't wait to hear any more. He was out of bed and pawin' around on the chair. All he found was a shirt, a pair of shoes, and one sock.

The lottery office wan't open when Julius got to it, so he set on the steps and waited. By and by, a young feller, a clerk—for, of course, the place wan't advertisin' itself as a lottery shop, but pretended to be somethin' legal—this young feller come along and went in, and Julius follered him.

"Well," says the young chap, lookin' at the specimen afore him pretty scornful, "what do you want?"

"I want money," says Julius, drawin' himself up.

"You look it," says the clerk.

"I want my money," says Julius. "Look here, sonny, you don't know who you're talkin' to. Look at that, and you'll change your mind."

He took the lottery ticket—Jonah's ticket—out of his pocket, and waved it vainglorious. The clerk run out from astern of the counter, and, after peekin' into the hall to be sure nobody else was in sight, shut the door and come back.

"Haven't you got any sense?" he asks, snappish. "Do you want to get us all arrested?"

"That's all right," says Julius. "That's all right. Rich folks don't get arrested so easy. You look at that."

He held the ticket right under the clerk's nose.

"All right," says the young feller, "I'm lookin' at it. What of it?"

"Do you see the number on it?"

"Yes, I see it. Number 416, isn't it?"

"It is. And Number 416 has drawed the second prize, twelve hundred dollars. Now, hand over the cash—— What's the matter with you? Don't open your mouth like that, or your brains'll run out, and you can't afford to lose any. Stop it, d'you hear?"

But the clerk didn't stop. He just leaned back against the wall and laughed and laughed. 'Twan't until Julius started to climb over the counter that he managed to say a word except "Ha! Ha!"

"There, there!" he said, holdin' his side with one hand and wavin' the other. "You'll have to excuse me, but it's the best joke of the season. I told the boss I'd bet it would happen, and sure enough it has. *That* ticket hasn't drawn any prize."

"It ain't? It ain't? Young feller, don't you talk to me. I've got one of your printed lists right here in my pocket."

"I know; I know. You've got one of the first lists. We've sent corrected ones since. Those lists are printed in the back shop here with a press and type the boss bought secondhand. The

type's old-fashioned, and the 9 is just like the 6. The feller that set it up made a mistake and turned the 9 over; 419 won the prize—not 416 at all—— Here, Bill! Bill!"

It took "Bill" and two other porter chaps from the back shop to put Julius out of that office, and there was consider'ble furniture smashed afore the ceremony was over. When 'twas over, Julius stood on the sidewalk, holdin' Edwards' handkerchief—the one with the kerosene on it—to his nose and tryin' to think.

He thought for a spell, and all he could think of was goin' back to where they'd stayed when they fust come ashore, and tryin' to locate old Jonah, who might, possibly, have got hold of a dollar or two somehow or other. He wan't any too anxious to see Jonah, considerin' how they'd run off and left him, but he was a consider'ble sight more anxious to see him that he was to see Edwards—just then.

When he got opposite to their old boardin' house the landlord was standin' by the door. Julius, who was scared on account of the "fire," and leavin so sudden, was walkin' right by, but the landlord hailed him.

"Ahoy, there!" he says; and, to Julius' surprise, he was cheerful and civil as could be. "Where in the world have you been? Old man Barber was here three times yesterday lookin' for you."

"Ain't—ain't he here now?" stammers Julius, cautious and keepin' out of reach. "Did the fire——"

"There wan't any fire. Nothin' but the lamp upset in the washbasin, that's all. Where'd you and that Britisher chum of yours go to, anyway? You took the wrong clothes by mistake, too, didn't you? Ho! Ho! That was a good one!"

Julius stuttered out some sort of an explanation, about the clothes and the fire, and not payin' for the rooms, and the like of that. He couldn't understand why the landlord was so good-natured.

"The rooms are all right," says the landlord. "Old Jonah paid for them. Say, do you want a berth? There's a steamer sailin' in an hour that needs an extry hand. I'll take you down aboard if you want to."

'Twas the first part of this that Julius paid the most attention to.

"Jonah paid for the rooms?" he sung out. "*Jonah* paid for 'em! What with, for the land sakes?"

"Money, of course. He went out next mornin'—a sight he was in your clothes—haw, haw!—and when he come back that night he was all excited. Seemed to have his pockets filled with money and to feel awful bad 'cause you two wa'n't here. Come back three times yesterday lookin' for you, as I said. He left a letter for you. It's in the bar now. I'll get it."

He went in and brought out the letter. It was addressed to "Mister Guleyus Sparow."

Julius tore open the envelope, and this is what he read:

DEER JULE AND HARRY: I have married the widdow woman i was telin' you about. i wanted to have you 2 come up for dinner but i cuddent lokate you nowhere. i cant wate any longer for my wife and me have gone to Niagra falls on a weddin trip. She has got money now. She is Ritch. Her tikket drawed second prize in the Lucky Fortune. She had Tikket 419. Goodby. See you Agen some time. Yours Trully,

JONAH P. BARBER.

"Well," asks the landlord, after a spell, "what's the news? You look as if 'twas kind of important. What are you thinkin' about?"

Julius fetched a long breath. There was a picture in his mind of a room, cold and bare, and a feller settin' by the window, a feller dressed in a gay quilt—gay but thin—made out of old neckties and pieces of silk and stuff. The feller was waitin'—waitin' for money to be brought to him.

"What are you thinkin' about?" asks the landlord again.

Julius rubbed his forehead.

"I was thinkin' of dreams," he says low. "They come true sometimes, don't they?"

"None of mine ever did. Or, if they did, I didn't know it."

"Maybe so; but there's one that has—and the feller that dreamed it don't know it has, either—not yet. When he does know it, I—well, I guess likely I'd rather he found it out by himself. Say, I'll take that steamer berth you was talkin' about."

"You'll have to hurry, then. She sails pretty quick."

"She can't sail too quick for me," says Julius. And they started full tilt for the wharf.

Another Cape Cod story by Joe Lincoln in the next issue.

THE TRAINING OF BALL PLAYERS

BASEBALL fans often wonder why a champion team can slump so hard occasionally. The training of ball players is vastly different from the training of collegians, boxers, or any other athletes. In brief, it consists of regularity rather than conditioning. It aims at general good health instead of physical fineness, for the latter cannot be maintained throughout a long baseball campaign. Football teams train for seven or eight weeks, for one supreme contest. So do prize fighters, track athletes, and others. The ball player's supreme test comes every day, for all games count in the percentage table. He has to keep in average condition. The trainer's work consists more in ministering to injuries than in supervising diet.

But when a champion team is going at top speed it is safe to say that the members are observing pretty closely the finer points of training. They are so interested in their work that they think of nothing else, talk of nothing else, and each day, when the battle is over, do nothing else but prepare for the game of the morrow. They can stand the pace just about as long as a fighter will train for his greatest bout and as long as a football team trains for its big game of the season. Then comes an inevitable reaction.

When the White Sox of 1906 had won twenty straight games, and appeared likely to go on indefinitely, they encountered a rainy day in Washington —August 24. In loafing and fretting, they unconsciously relaxed the high tension at which they had been traveling. Next day they dropped two games to the near-tailenders, and did not regain their stride until September 5, when they pounced upon Detroit for an entire series. In the interim they had won only three games.

On the day the White Sox fell, the Highlanders began a triumphal march, winning fourteen out of fifteen games, and putting themselves into the hunt before the Sox retrieved themselves. They went along at top form until they had ousted Chicago from the lead, winning twenty-two of the twenty-eight games played in the thirty days beginning August 25. Then, with the pennant practically conceded to them, they relaxed from the strain, and dropped three straight to Detroit, a sixth-place crew. The winning of two of those games would have gotten them into the world's series.

Fools

By Roy Norton

Author of "High Finance," "Arroyo Jones," Etc.

"Wanted—a chance for excitement, anywhere in the West." You'd hardly believe that that advertisement could have emanated from the group of miners who called themselves "The Competents" and whom Norton has told us about in previous stories; but it is true just the same. The Competents, returned from Alaska, have tried very hard to settle down and enjoy the blessings of wealth; but they craved adventure; so they advertised for it. This new series tells about the results.

When a man wants money
He gets mighty busy,
A-lookin' for good pay dirt.
But when he's got money
He gets sort of dizzy
A-thinkin' how little it's worth.

When we was all busted
We roamed the hills over
As happy as tenderfoot clams.
But now we ain't busted
And all live in clover
There ain't nothin' that's worth a good damn.

I HAVE this poem yet, a sort of original manuscript just as Shakespeare George wrote it, and that is the way it reads exactly, except for a little change in the last line. It was written just eight months after all of us fellows they used to call "The Competents" returned from Alaska and settled down on our haunches to enjoy the blessings of wealth. And this enjoyment business isn't as blessed as it's cracked up to be. Most people have their own ways of enjoying themselves. A lazy man likes to loaf, but none of us were lazy. We didn't any of us care a lot about books, except Shakespeare George; we all liked Mister Paganini's fiddling better than this stuff they call grand opera; we none of us felt very comfortable in fancy clothes; we didn't care for big towns because the folks who live in them didn't understand us and we didn't understand them; a good cabin beats the best hotel in the world for downright comfort; railways are a nuisance; churches made us feel like fish out of water because we seemed to get a little mite nearer to the good Lord Almighty out in the tops of the hills, and when you've bought everything you want to buy, and a lot of stuff you don't, and helped out all your friends that will let you, all the balance of the money in the world isn't going to do you the least particle of good.

That is the way it summed itself up to all of us there on Willow Creek, after we settled down. There was no enjoyment in going anywhere alone. We'd been used to one another too long for that. We couldn't all agree on any place to go together, and so, week by week, things got worse. Nobody would admit to anybody else that he was discontented, because we weren't any of us the kind that wanted to be called

soreheads. It was the poem by Shakespeare George that brought the eruption.

Everybody had the sulks. Tim, who had sent to Europe for a rifle that was guaranteed to shoot seven miles, had proved that its effective range was just five hundred yards, and Tom Evans had made a higher score with an ancient Springfield at that distance. Mister Paganini was the only one on our creek who was unruffled, but couldn't play his violin because he had broken his E string, whichever one that is. Sympathy Smith had just kicked an expensive camera he had bought from a mail-order house completely round his cabin, and thrown a flatiron at a phonograph he had won at a raffle, and Stinger Johnson had broken a blade out of his new pearl-handled knife playing mumble peg. I had read an old copy of a San Francisco daily for the second time, including everything from news to advertisements, and had found the latter the most interesting because they allowed room for speculation. It was a desolate and idle world with nothing in to occupy one's attention.

I found Shakespeare George lying full length in the shade of an abandoned tool shack, and laboriously scrawling on a piece of paper that he tried to conceal as I came round the corner, so, for want of anything better to do, I sprawled out beside him.

"Say, Bill," he asked, rolling over on his side to face me, "did you ever get so tired of just doin' plain nothin' at all that you felt like robbin' a hen roost, or a stage, or settin' fire to a government reserve, or takin' to booze, or any other old thing so you might have somethin' to do?"

It was the first complaint I had heard him make. I was glad of it, because I had been in just about that same mental state myself for some weeks. I told him so, and, finding me in sympathy, he grinned a trifle sheepishly, and unfolded the paper.

"Been writin' poetry," he declared, handing it to me. "Poetry's a mighty soothin' thing for the nerves. Now I ain't given much to braggin', Bill, but if I do say it myself, they ain't many poets that's got anything on me. All I lack is a little education. I know it. It's a downright shame for a feller with the divine spark to have no knowledge. I been thinkin' some about goin' away to a college. Lord! I got to do somethin'! I just cain't stand this no more."

He ran his fingers distractedly through his hair that was already beginning to gray and thin, and there was a vast restlessness and discontent in his attitude.

Suddenly he sat up, and I saw that he was staring at something in the newspaper that I had thrown to one side while reading his effusion.

"By the great horn spoon," he declared, reaching for it, "that's it! That's a way out of it! Never thought of that!"

He pointed toward a heading with a finger that had lost its marks of honest work. I read:

If you've lost anything, or want anything, try an ad in our classified columns. We bring results!

"What's the matter with that?" he demanded, as if I had disputed him. "I'm goin' to advertise for excitement. That's what I've lost. I'm goin' to find somethin' besides hangin'——"

We were interrupted by some one calling my name, and I stood up to learn that Marietta wanted me to come up the hill to help do something or another, and so left Shakespeare George still sprawled on the ground, and still discontented.

The poetic effort was too good to keep secret. I carried it with me and showed it to the others, but no one laughed. There was a strange, shamefaced air that was noticeable as each man read it, and then, one after an-

other, admitted that George had blundered very closely on the truth. Each did so reluctantly, for it seemed almost like being a traitor to our good luck, and to Willow Creek, where we had made our money and where we had worked for so many years. It was like going back on an old friend who had given us all things possible and now was being dropped. We owned that gulch up there in the tops of the hills, from its head to its foot—from rim rock to rim rock, and we were the ones who had stripped it bare. We owned as comfortable cabins as there were in the world. There was nothing that money could buy that we wanted. We had more than enough. There was not a man of us on the creek that would not have given his last dollar or his life for any of his partners. There were no strangers or unpleasant ones among us; there was nothing but peace. Just that. We were suffering from too much peace!

None of us had a chance to say anything to George about his poem that evening, for he sauntered off over the hills with his rifle in the crook of his arm and did not return in time for supper. And the next morning he left, quite early, for the camp down below. We forgot his poem in the wildly exciting task of building a log hen house for Marietta, and it was completed when he returned three days later. He came tramping up the trail with an aggressive manner, and went to elaborate pains to explain that he had been away on business; but he had not forgotten that precious poem, for immediately after supper, when we were all sitting around Sympathy Smith's cabin and either smoking or playing games, he referred to it.

"By the way, Bill," he said, after staring for a long time at the rafters, "that little piece of mine. Did you give it back?"

"No," I said. "Here it is."

He looked at me sharply.

"Did—did you show it to any one?" he asked, scowling a little.

"Yes," I confessed, "I did. And, what's more, they all seemed to agree with you."

I added the last part merely to prevent George from being angry, but the effect was astonishing. He let out a whoop that made every one turn toward him as if thinking him a little mad.

"Good!" he shouted. "That's the best news I've heard in six months. Well, fellers, I've been feeling sneaky all the way up from the camp and wonderin' how to break the news, but now I can let you in on it with me. We'll all go! Look here!"

He fished from his pocket a wallet from which he took a clipping from the classified column of a San Francisco newspaper, and I read it aloud.

WANTED.—A chance for excitement, anywhere in the West. Willing to make expenses, but money no object. Anybody with anything to offer address George Carver, Two Forks Camp, California.

He was quite proud of that advertisement, and looked from one to the other of us to see whether we approved. A chorus greeted him with: "Well! Get any answers?" and even a stranger would have been convinced of the undercurrent of eagerness in the room.

"Yes," said George, "I got three. One was from a woman who wanted to get married and said she'd give me excitement enough to turn my hair gray if I had enough money. The next was from a clothin' house, tellin' me that they could send me a suit by mail they'd guarantee to fit. But the last one sounded good. I'll read it because the writin's a little tough till you've got used to it. Looks like a Chinese laundry ticket. Here she goes:

"DEAR SIR: Would you be interested in looking after a lot of gold I cached thirty years ago, and which place I cached same I forgot and couldn't find no more? I know

'most where it is, but it takes some money to get it because it's off the edge of the desert, and a man must have an outfit to carry grub and stuff to last him while he hunts for it. Each time I tried it I was busted and had to get out because the grub give out. If this suits you write to Zacharia Mills, known as Lost Mine Mills, Placerville, California."

"That," declared Sympathy Smith in his big, deep voice, "sounds like something written by an honest man in dead hard luck!"

"Sounds to me like the same old gold brick," declared Tim, running his hand over his red bristles, and ready for an argument.

But George stopped it by saying: "Hold on! We don't have to tackle this till we talk to the old man, do we? If he's on the level, it gives us somethin' to do besides sittin' here twiddlin' our thumbs."

"Or writing poetry," suggested Tom, with a grin.

"Let's a couple of us take a run to Placerville and see him," George went on, paying no attention to the gibe. "It's not a very long trip—no more than twenty hours from here, and it might be just what we're after."

He was generous enough to let us all in on his crack-brained expedition, taking it for granted that what one man on Willow Creek wished, the others would also desire. If George had owned a dozen rotten eggs he would have divided them just as carefully as if they were fresh laid! However, two days later George and I got off the train at Placerville and stopped at a hotel that had seen better days—before the State stopped free hydraulicking, for instance. We loafed around and saw the roundhouse and what else there was to see, and made our first inquiry after supper, when everything seemed propitious. There was no one in the hotel office at the time, and the clerk had nothing better to do than to fasten some new brass tags to hotel keys. We sidled up until we could drape ourselves over the counter, and opened polite conversation.

"I wonder, pardner, if you ever heard of a man named Zachary Mills?" George asked, as if not caring particularly whether the clerk had or not. The clerk looked up and laughed.

"What are you handing me?" he asked. "Everybody knows old Lost Mine."

He hung a key on the rack and added: "Harmless old cuss, though. I never believed in making fun of the poor old feller. Works hard, and if old Zack owes you a dollar, you can bet ten to one you'll get it some time."

He "ziz-z-zed" through his teeth, and began on another tag.

"Believe that stuff about his having lost a mine?" I asked, lest he forget us.

"Sure! Why not? The boss here—reckon you know him if you've been around here any time within the last twenty years—swears he saw some of the gold that time Zack came back into Mohave, and that he never saw any other like it. Too bad the old chap couldn't ever find it again. Tried often enough—whenever he could get the money together. Been about six or seven years since he took the last trip. Now he's getting too old. 'Most all in, old Lost Mine is. He'll never go again, I'm thinking."

We didn't care to arouse too much curiosity by questions, so waited until we were in our room to talk it over. If the clerk told the truth we were not being led on for a mere grubstake, and there's nothing interests a miner more than a story of a lost mine or a pot of gold. Most of us are like children, after all.

George was talking across the darkness of the room when I went to sleep and began exactly where he left off when I awoke the next morning. We had a pretty stiff walk to make, down into the river bed, past the slate quar-

ries, up the opposite side, and almost to Murphy's before we found the quartz seam that Mills was pegging into in the hopes of finding a pocket.

He was a fine old patriarch, who looked like the picture of Moses in the big Bible Marietta bought on the installment plan and kept exactly alongside the red plush photograph album on the center table in the parlor. Only he had it on Moses a little for looks. Lived more in the open air, I suppose. And we liked him. There was something sort of plaintive about the old chap, as if tough luck had softened him and made him a philosopher, instead of hardening him into a grumbler. He gave us his story without any frills.

He had been prospecting that time he made the strike, and made the mistake that lots of other good men have —went a little batty when he found so much gold, and overstayed his food supply. Then his burro died, and he had to hoof it across the desert and carry his own water supply.

Ever try packing? You read and a lot about these fellows who can do thirty or forty miles a day with anywhere from a hundred to two hundred pounds on their backs, but somehow you never see them. Even thirty pounds gets pretty heavy where the going is bad, and thirty pounds, over sand, in heat, day after day, becomes thirty tons. Besides, when a keg of water begins to run low, it sloshes about until the sound is enough to drive a thirsty man mad. So when another outfit found Mills staggering around, and stumbling and falling, and seeing and talking to things that weren't there, it was a toss-up for a while whether he or the desert had won.

The only thing he had to prove that it wasn't all a desert dream was a wad of gold, gold that had been "cobbled" out, some of it still looking like fern leaves and patches of crystals and little forests. Naturally they took him into the nearest camp, and waited for him to recover, but they had a long wait—several months. All that time he was about half blank, and put in most of his time wondering what on earth could have killed his burro. That seemed vastly more important than his cached treasure.

Finally, out of gratitude for the two fellows that had brought him in, he tried to take them back. And that's where the real tragedy began, for he couldn't find the place. They tried it several times, and gave up. After that Mills tried to go it alone. Then once or twice with others, until at last people began to doubt his story, because those who had seen the gold itself, as years went on, either died or scattered, and strangers thought him cracked.

Well, when he talked to George and me he admitted that finding that gold was his only hope. He was already too old to try it without considerable help, and was willing to give the lion's share to whoever got it. All he wanted was enough to be certain that he wouldn't pass out in an almshouse. The old chap had a horror of that, more than of death. He was obsessed with the dread of becoming a mere liver on charity. He had worked hard, and paid his way through a good, clean, honest life, and it didn't seem quite fair in Providence to desert him in his last days. To men of his kind getting something for nothing is disgrace. We decided, then and there, to give the old chap his last chance, fools though we might be for doing it.

He took us up to his cabin, and everything about it indicated the old fellow's character. It was as clean as if kept by a dozen Dutch girls with wooden shoes. The old chap had a motto on the wall that some one who was color-blind had worked in worsted and given him for a Christmas present:

Thou art my staff and refuge and will not desert me in mine age.

It told quite a story, that motto did. I wondered how many times he had read it, when things didn't go quite right and the future looked pretty black! It leaked out that all he had in the world was that cabin and about twenty acres of ground he had bought when he was young, and he had hung on to these through thick and thin, coming back after every trip, 'most always like a weary tramp seeking refuge when there was no other place to go. He confided to us that he worked that seam when there was nothing else to do, and had been drifting in at odd times for more than ten years, but had never taken out a cent's worth of gold.

"There was a long time," he said, looking off toward the tops of the hills as if seeing something left pretty far behind, "when I wouldn't let anybody grubstake me for another try. Then I did let two or three in, and that came to nothing. Then I made a trip alone, because it didn't look exactly right to take any man's money when the chances for my making good were so slim; but now I'm too old to try alone, and—well—I ain't got anything—not even as much as twenty dollars, and when a man is 'most seventy years old, and busted, he does things he wouldn't have done twenty years before."

We nodded and waited while he looked at us apologetically, as if wanting to be sure that we didn't think him either a gold-brick man or a lunatic. As if reassured, he went on:

"So I want to tell you that I've tried all those times and found nothin', and there are about ten chances to one we won't find it this time; but if we could cross with an outfit big enough to last us for a real try of—say—two or three weeks or so, instead of one, which was always my limit, we might find it."

Again we nodded, for this sounded reasonable.

"And it wouldn't be fair, seein' as there are six of you, and one of me, and me not much good at that, for me to take more than my seventh," said old Lost Mine Mills.

"And me and my pardners ain't that kind at all," declared George, by which I knew that the old chap had won his sympathy. "I think the other boys will agree with me that you ought to have at least a third. Ain't that so, Bill?"

"How much did you say there was?" I asked, wondering if there would be enough on that basis to pay expenses.

"There's about thirty-five thousand dollars worth," the old prospector replied. "Enough to make an old man like me independent with his share. Enough to give younger men like you a good start."

George and I looked at each other and couldn't help smiling a little bit, considering that five thousand dollars to either of us, or any of the other boys, was a pretty small sum. So we insisted that Mills' share should be a third, and went away, leaving him a quite happy and hopeful old gentleman.

We knew our partners all right, for when we reached Willow Creek and told them the story, they agreed that we had done exactly the right thing, and I think that in preparation for the new trip the camp was happier than it had ever been since we made a stake. Everybody felt good except Stinger Johnson, and he was afraid Marietta wouldn't let him go, but she was a wise little woman. She knew how her husband felt. She told him he had to go along to help "poor old Mister Mills find his gold," and Stinger pretended that he hated to leave her for so long, and didn't see how she could get along with no one on Willow Creek but Mr. Paganini, our blind patriarch, Stinger's and her boy that was just beginning to be big enough to get lost occasionally, and Mrs. Sympathy Smith, but—Marietta understood all right!

So there were six of us, just as there used to be away back ten or fifteen

years before, to meet the old prospector in Sacramento. All of us now showing gray hairs, all of us a little steadier, but all of us young again because we were once more "hitting the trail" and heading toward the sky line, and speculating as to what might be over behind the farthest range of hills.

In the old days we would have permitted Sacramento to know that we had arrived, but times seemed to have changed. While waiting for Mills, we went up and looked at the pictures in the capitol building, something we wouldn't have done when younger, and when our man arrived lost no time in taking the next train out.

We came to the end of the railway journey and took a stage to Rabbit Flat, a camp on the edge of the desert where we were to buy an outfit, and there, for the first time since we had started, we felt at home. It was one of those cheery places where every other building along the main street is a saloon and the alternating ones gambling houses or dance halls. One of those sociable communities that don't get good until about two o'clock in the morning and sleep until noon. There was the refined music of the dance halls, fighting sounds from squealing phonographs and orchestrions, and several very lively variety shows, where fifty-seven varieties of women strove to entertain as many types of miners so long as the latter had any money left. And in this choice mining camp, before we had been there an hour, we found a dozen men who knew us. It was the beginning of trouble. One could smell it in the air.

George and Tom were walking forty or fifty feet ahead of me when I overheard the first rumble. A man standing in front of a saloon with five or six others, none of whom observed me, pointed my partners out.

"Fellers," he said, with an air of importance, "I'm goin' to tell you who them two up there are. They're two old shellbacks that have made a fortune, and are part of a crowd we used to call 'The Competents' up in Alaska. Guess you know what that means, don't you? It means that they never go after anything without gettin' it! And they're here now with an old curmudgeon named Mills."

"No! Old Lost Mine Mills?" demanded one of the other loafers.

"Just him," said another.

"Then if those chaps they call 'The Competents' have come here with him, you can bet they're goin' to try to find old Lost Mine's cache and where the gold in it came from," asserted another.

"And if they're after it, it's a ten-to-one bet they'll get it," declared the man who had first spoken, and whom I now recognized as a prospector we had occasionally met up in Tyook.

I turned and walked thoughtfully back the way I had come, for I knew that with this kind of talk going on we would have a stampede following us the minute we started away. I waited until after supper, and already there were signs of it, for there were more men lounging around the hotel where we stopped than appeared to have any business there. If one of us got up and started out to the street there was a subtle air of expectancy.

Poor old Mills attracted as much attention as any of us, and there were two or three ancients who dropped in ostensibly to chat with him; but the old fellow preserved an air of secret amusement and was uncommunicative.

After one of them left, Mills leaned across the arm of his chair toward me and said: "That feller that just went out is a man I once tried to get to stand good for a sack of flour and a piece of bacon when there wasn't a storekeeper in all this camp that would give me that much credit to keep me from starvin'. Mighty solicitous now, ain't they?"

I passed the word along to the other

boys that I thought we ought to go up to one of our rooms, where we could have a talk, and they, being alert to suggestions, acted on this one with the result that, within fifteen minutes, one after the other of us got up and wandered up to George's and my room, it being the largest.

I told them what I had heard that afternoon, and they grinned and listened. This was like some of the real old times we had known. It made things pleasant. While I was talking, George grinned and slipped off his shoes. We surmised what he intended to do, and so all talked more or less at once while George got to the door. He suddenly jerked it open, to disclose two very astonished men in the bent attitude of those who have been glued to keyholes. They fled just as Tom Evans went to the window.

The hotel was a low, two-storied structure, and when Tom jerked the window shade to one side and looked out there was a crash outside, and two other gentlemen who had been patiently standing on a pyramid of goods boxes went to earth with a crash and took to their heels. Tim impolitely dashed some water from a cracked pitcher at the keyhole of the door leading to a room adjoining, and produced some smothered oaths from the other side.

We certainly were having a good time, and were convinced that we were objects of much curiosity to the inhabitants of Rabbit Flat. Every one enjoyed it but Lost Mine Mills, who appeared troubled. We did our best to comfort him and cheer him up with the assurance that if this camp undertook to follow us, it would have its work cut out. We had been striking out to find prospects when most of its inhabitants were still in knee breeches or swaddling clothes. We worked out our plan that night.

It was very simply done. George and I gave out that we had come to Rabbit Flat on a fool's errand and were going to strike out for ourselves. We took the stage back to the end of the railway line, a day's journey away. There we quietly bought seven burros for packing and a pony for Mills to ride, a big outfit of grub, and that night being favorable on account of a prize fight that nobody could think of missing, we slipped away over the trail toward Rabbit Flat.

We camped around the corner of a spur where no one from the trail could see us, and waited.

On the next night every one but Mills joined us, it being old Lost Mine's cue to sit around as if we had deserted him and to try to induce some one to grubstake him, while the others merely took stage to the railway line, then walked back in the night to where we watched and met them on the trail.

We had left the pony behind to be called for, and on the third night Mills arrived, having done the same trip. Naturally the minute he had gone around Rabbit Flat looking for a grubstake and talking about his cache of gold, every one concluded that if we had given him up as a bad job, his scheme must be no good. It's astonishing how quick men lose interest in a fellow who comes to them for a grubstake. It's been so ever since Lazarus held out his hands.

We rested until the next night, and then, under the stars, when the whole desert looked dim and pale, struck out to cross it with Lost Mine in the lead, insisting now and then that some one else should ride for a while, and that he was still young enough to do his eight or ten miles. We were more like a lot of boys going on a Saturday picnic than a bunch of scarred, seasoned old-timers striking off on a new quest. Old Lost Mine was the only one who was terribly in earnest. It meant everything to him, and merely a fine new adventure for us. To him another failure

would be the end of hope, while to us it meant nothing more than a return to Willow Creek and the loss of time and cost of an outfit that we could well afford.

For five days we traveled that way, and whatever else might be said of the old veteran up in the lead, he knew where he wanted to go, and headed toward the big, barren-looking hills that came into view as unerringly as a hound dog coming home from the hunt. He began to show an eagerness that was almost pathetic. He began to talk of nothing else around the camp at night, or when some one of us trudged within hearing during the daytime. Moreover, he was convinced that this time we were going to find it. He said he had dreamed of the way the hills looked where we entered a big, bare, rocky pass, and—oh, well! There may be something in dreams, after all. For he did lead us directly to a sort of pass after we got to the hills and left the desert behind.

I never saw such bare mountains as those. It was as if everything about them and in them and on them had died all at once for want of moisture. The sand and dust worked right up to the foot of the range as if the mountains had either shoved themselves through it from below or the sea of sand had kept climbing up and across the valley that was now the desert to smother the hills. No wonder that so many men went mad when they tried to prospect in such a place as this was. Why, we actually dug for firewood and found it at the foot of a cañon! Trees that had been buried for hundreds of years perhaps, but still preserved for fuel.

Then we settled down to a systematic search with old Lost Mine directing us. We knew that we had to find a defile so narrow that a mule with a pack couldn't have passed through it, and that then we would climb up by hand and toehold for a hundred feet or more, and come out into a sort of barren valley where here and there scrub pines found enough moisture to live, and where probably in the spring and winter season water could have been found by digging. But to find the mouth of that defile was what had baffled every one who had ever undertaken the job.

On the first day we found nothing, nor the second, nor the third, and each day the old man's spirits fell. He had been so sure of the dream, and had such a hunch that he had hoped to walk right to it. On the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh days we scattered out in pairs to find the defile, and had begun to think that perhaps, after all, the old chap was mistaken. Then we decided to move camp a few miles farther along on the desert side and make a try from there, although the old man resisted, because we were positive that we could find nothing more where we then were, and one place seemed about as good as another when we were merely prospecting and watching the grub and water run lower each day.

All the fun seemed to have gone out of the party from Willow Creek. Perhaps we were too tired at night to have talked much anyway, but I think the principal reason was that we saw a fine, honest old man dying before us by inches. And work? Knowing that our time was about up, none of us ever worked more desperately than we did as the days advanced.

There came a night when, as we sat by the camp fire, some one said what had to be said, that the very limit now was but two days. We all of us tried not to look at the old chap, but couldn't help it. He seemed to have wilted down, and just sat there staring into the fire with eyes that said a whole lot more than a man wants to see more than once in a lifetime. They said this was the hopeless finish, that life was a failure, and that perhaps it would be a pleasant thing just to go to sleep—for

a long, long time, where one could rest forever and be forgotten.

Then everybody talked foolish words, trying to keep him from thinking, and also as if each one was trying to keep from saying some of those things that rush up from the heart and choke a man and cloud his eyes.

We all pretended to go to sleep early, but, as I lay there on my back looking up at nothing, I could hear that poor old fellow by my side rolling and tumbling, and once, in the stillness, I heard him whispering, and I think he was talking to the Big Friend off up beyond the stars. Men who have prospected a lifetime, alone in the hills, do seem to get on better speaking terms with the Lord Almighty than others ever do.

Sympathy and I were working together the next day, doing the same old trick of taking landmarks and quartering from them while looking for that defile or a little valley, and it must have been about three o'clock in the afternoon when I heard him yell. I answered and made my way to him after a hard trip down a mountainside into a gulch and up the opposite side to where he waited on top of a little ridge.

"Well, Bill," he said, grinning, "seems to me like that's it off down below there."

He pointed, and sure enough we could see what looked like a dried-up lake bottom away down under us. We did some jubilating up there on the peak, and, to make sure that we wouldn't lose sight of it again, built a big cairn of rock before going down toward a gulch that looked as if it might be the one with the defile. It fooled us even then, for it was blind and we had to try two more, and climb back to the cairn once to make sure of our direction. Then we worked along the ridge, and discovered the right one.

No wonder that no one had ever been able to find it. Nothing but luck ever showed it to us. The pass was so narrow and choked up that it was almost impossible to find it ten feet away. It was littered with stones as if an earthquake had half filled it since that time old Lost Mine Mills staggered out of it to tackle the desert.

It looked like a blind crevice in the footwall of a cliff—nothing more; but, about fifteen or twenty feet inside, it turned, and we saw that it led to an incline. We crawled and scrambled up it, and, sure enough, there we were in the sort of place described, a fine little valley with stunted trees almost bone dry at this season of the year; but that wasn't all.

About a hundred yards from us was what was left of a wikiup built for a camp. There was even a rag of weather-beaten, rotting canvas fluttering from a pole that made one corner. We looked at each other, but didn't say anything as we loped toward it. Rusted tin cans showed that whoever had camped there had been well supplied, for there were the familiar condensed-milk tins, and another that had held desiccated potatoes. There was what was left of a pine-bough bunk, showing that he had worked a long time, and an old shoe with the sole worn through.

"A needlelike rock on the north side. In a water keg at the foot of a needlelike rock," Sympathy rumbled, repeating the words we had heard poor old Mills say so often, and we looked around.

We started together, and hurried across the flat, for we could see the needlelike rock quite plainly, the only one in sight. We walked slowly and quietly, as if we knew what to expect and were too badly cut up to mention it.

At the foot of the landmark was a hole, and, thrown carelessly on its side within it, was an old water keg, quite empty. Suddenly we sat down and looked across the pit at each other,

and Sympathy said a few strong words that ended with "rotten luck!" It was pretty plain what had happened. Some one had heard the old man describe the place, as he had done probably a thousand times, and, being a little lower than an ordinary horse thief, had come there, found the cache after a hunt, tried to find another pocket or lobe of gold like it, then gone away with the pelf. It must have been a long time previous, we decided, because the camp in that climate might have been ten or fifteen years old.

"It'll kill the old man!" declared Sympathy, wiping the sweat from his forehead on the sleeve of his shirt. "It'll just naturally be the death of him. What the devil can we do, Bill?"

Having about as much of an idea as a locoed steer, I shook my head and stared hopelessly at the hole, then got down and lifted the keg out and threw it to one side. I poked the loose stuff at the bottom around with my foot, and saw something yellow. It was a chunk of the gold-leafed quartz, and certainly was rich. For a few minutes we were right hopeful, and dug and scratched and sifted like a pair of gophers; but all we could find were about a dozen more like it, pieces that Mills evidently had left over after the keg was filled and had buried under it, so that the pilferer had overlooked them in the joy of the bigger find. Perhaps some of the dirt he dug out had fallen down in and buried the pieces when he pulled the keg out of the ground. Anyhow, that was all there was, and not worth more than a hundred dollars at the most.

It was getting late, and we knew we must get out before dark or pass the night with nothing to eat or drink, so went back through the defile trying to think of some easy way to break the news to Mills; for we knew we must tell him we had found the place or he would some time tell other men and send them on a fool's errand that might cost them their lives. We had some old letters in our pockets that we tore into little fine pieces and made a trail so we could come back without any trouble, and trudged away for the camp. We had traveled farther than we thought, and were quite late reaching it.

After supper we got word to the boys, one by one, and agreed to hold a council of war the next day, detailing Tim to get the old man away in the opposite direction so he wouldn't learn of it. That worked out all right, and the next forenoon all of us fellows from Willow Creek, except Tim, stood around that robbed cache, looking pretty doleful. It was Shakespeare George who thought of a plan.

"I don't know how you boys feel about it," he said, scowling down at the empty pit, "but I'd rather give a thousand out of my pocket than to let that fine old feller know this. I think a heap of him."

"Me, too," said Sympathy, and the rest of us agreed.

"But he isn't the sort that would take it. Heavens! What he's afraid of is having to accept charity," I said.

Then for a while we talked about that phase of our adventure, until George slapped his leg and said: "Here! I've got it!"

We all stretched our necks hopefully in his direction.

"To-night we'll say we've got to pull out, because we're right up to the last of the water."

"Which is quite true," gravely asserted Tom.

"So to-morrow morning we begin to pack," George went on. "While the rest of us are doing that, Bill, you and Sympathy say you're goin' to have a last look, even if you've only got an hour to do it in. We kick some about your leaving us all the work of breakin' camp, but away you go around that spur in this direction. We get ready

and wait and wait and yell and kick and rare and cuss some more. About an hour later you two come round into sight totin' this keg all tied up in the pieces of your canvas grub sack, and it weighs a ton because it's full of rock. You've got these stray pieces you've found in your pockets to show as samples of what's in the keg, which we say we ain't got time to open. Then it's up to us to pack it on a burro and keep the old man from ever gettin' a peep into it, which will be some work, believe me! We put up a job on him as soon as we can, and sell it, and give him his share, which we'll make—say—fifteen hundred each and six times fifteen is nine thousand he gets. We'll get whoever helps us to say it come to just twenty-seven thousand."

We all went into this scheme with some doubts, but it was the best we could do. And I shan't forget the old chap's happiness when we came in, on the following day, with that keg of rock tied up in a hundred knots as hard as we could make them. Of course he wanted to open it right away, and the others pretended they wanted to see it, too, and we started as if to do it until George objected, and every one argued at once until it was decided best to wait till we got back to civilization.

We hadn't started back any too soon, for we were on half-water rations a day before we landed in Rabbit Flat, where Lost Mine promptly gave out that we had found his treasure, and every one wanted to see it, and to handle the specimens, while he stood around and jubilated like a four-year-old boy with a new pair of red-topped boots. We kept him from opening the keg there by telling him we couldn't spare another day's time, and all sorts of little excuses whenever he wanted to have a look. If he hadn't been so old and so happy he would certainly have become suspicious. That kept up till we reached Sacramento, where, the minute we landed, the old gentleman had to buy a new pair of boots, Tim having stolen one from under the old man's berth at night and chucked it out of the window. I accompanied him to a boot store in a hack, and when we came back the keg of gold was gone. George came back after a while and soothed Mills by telling him that he had taken the gold to a broker.

"Where'd you take it to?" the old fellow demanded.

"Selby Smelting and Refining Company," said George, looking out of the window and wishing some one would change the subject, and Lost Mine voiced his disappointment at not having had one more look at it until he was afraid he had hurt George's feelings and proceeded to apologize for seeming so ungrateful.

Then the next day George came in with a faked smelter return sheet that wouldn't have fooled any one but a half-blind man, because the printer's ink on it was scarcely dry, and it showed that we had turned in just twenty-seven thousand and ten dollars and forty-three cents' worth.

Poor old Lost Mine Mills! Tears streamed down over his white beard, and his hands, so knotted and crippled, trembled, and he couldn't speak when George gave him his third of that fictitious sum.

The old man thought a third was too much for him, but we stuck to it, and did finally agree, by way of compromise, to run up to Placerville with him and stay a couple of days.

It was worth while to observe the difference in the way men treated him up there. There was just that change that comes when one who has been considered a busted, loony old has-been is suddenly found to be a comfortable, prosperous, sane old gentleman. We were enjoying ourselves to the full, having as good a time as we'd ever had in our lives watching the old

chap and listening to his talk. I don't think there was ever a happier man than Lost Mine Mills, come home again, vindicated. A million couldn't have made him more joyful. He was liberal, and gave those specimen pieces of ore away to men who had stuck to him in all the lean years.

It was our third afternoon in his cabin, near Murphy's, when the stage stopped and the driver yelled: "Hello! Lost Mine! Here's a letter for you."

We were sitting on the porch in front when the old man came out with his steel-rimmed spectacles in his hand and tore the letter open and read it. He ran his finger along under each line, and then reached up and took his spectacles off as if they were blurred, and blew his breath on them, wiped them on his bandanna, and put them back. I noticed that his fingers trembled. Then, of a sudden, he brushed the glasses from his fine, high nose, crumpled the letter into his hand, and stared at us with his eyes very widely opened and his heavy, bushy white eyebrows twisting as if trying to repress himself.

"You lied to me!" he said in a voice that was queerly strained and husky. "God knows why you did it, but you lied."

He paused for an instant, glaring from one to the other, and then held both hands out, and it seemed as if every fiber of his body was trembling and shaking.

"And Heaven help me! I believed you and was happy. You didn't sell a keg of gold to Selby's. They say so. I gave away what specimens you found, and wrote Selby's to send me some more for keepsakes, and to send me the bill. They say they never bought, nor never heard of my gold. They say no such gold has been sold in Sacramento, because they are the only ones there who buy such ore."

"Boys—boys," he said in a pitiful, creaking voice suddenly very old and broken, "you meant well, but I can't take the money! I can't! I——"

We helped him into the house and to his bunk, over which he fell as if every ounce of resistance and strength were gone—hopelessly—never to return, and we stood around, shamefaced and solicitous. There was nothing to say, no excuses to offer, no expediency in further lies. By well-meant, blundering kindness we had stabbed him. We were standing there, each of us perching on one foot then the other, and looking at one another helplessly, when outside we heard a boisterous series of wild yells, and Stinger and Tom came clumping up on the porch and inside, still yelling their heads off before we could stop them. George turned on them fiercely.

"Why—what's the matter? What's up?" demanded Tom, staring at the old prospector.

"He's got wise. That's all," rumbled Sympathy in a tone of infinite disgust, "and won't let us help him out by so much as a dollar."

Stinger and Tom let out another yell, and bent over poor, old Lost Mine, who was staring up at that worsted motto on the wall as if for the first time in all his faithful life he was questioning its splendid promise.

"We got tired of loafin' this mornin'," Tom growled in his deep voice, "so we put a shot in your drift down there just for the fun of it. We don't give a cuss whether you take our money or not, because you'll not need it, anyhow. You'll have a heap more than that of your own. Old pardner, we blew into the pocket, and the floor of your drift is plastered with gold!"

"Turn About Is Fair Play," the next story in Roy Norton's Willow Creek series, will appear in the first September number, on sale August 7th.

Father Also Ran

By Holworthy Hall

Author of "The Terrible Freshman," "Pepper," Etc.

Sometimes it's the millionaire's son who "works his way through college." It comes pretty hard to gilded youth—but if Pepper McHenry backs the play the game is half won for the player

IT was generally understood in Cambridge that Roger Ward suffered from an extraordinarily aggravated case of Dad. It was specifically known that he had to make daily reports showing how much he worked and how little he played; that his allowance was figured out on a cost-accounting basis, with a five-per-cent surplus for dissipation in the form of one theater a month, and commutation tickets for the best libraries; and that when he went home on a vacation he never dared to take with him any ties which apparently outdistanced the purchasing power of a quarter. It was common information that Roger's father was a wealthy man, but those of Roger's friends who had seen his cash account were inclined to be cynical about it. They alleged that no father who had such overwhelming respect for a nickel could possibly be on familiar terms with real money. The whole story, however, didn't come out until after the collapse of Monk Spinden's Prohibition Club, which was organized for the sole purpose of humiliating Pepper McHenry, and reducing him to subjection for the remainder of his college course.

The Prohibition Club was a dismal failure from its very inception. It left McHenry with an additional cash stipend from his father, a little runabout from his mother, an improved physique due to his enforced repudiation of alcohol and tobacco, and the undying regard of six or seven young women in Wellesley, Smith, and Briarcliff, each of whom believed, curiously enough, that Pepper had sworn off on her account alone. It also got into the newspapers, and when Roger Ward's father out in St. Louis read about it, he positively declined to consider it as a joke.

The idea of a brewer's son allying himself with a Prohibition Club didn't coincide in the least with the old gentleman's brand of humor; and since there had been in the past a number of incidents which his limited experience in college affairs led him to believe were signs of unworthiness on the part of his son, he let his temper run away with him, and asked the faculty for waivers. He then wired Roger to the effect that the last straw was cast, and the camel had struck.

With customary attention to detail, he told Roger where to sell his furniture, and how much to get for it. He specified the train he should take. He estimated within sixty cents the amount which should remain intact from the last installment of allowance—it would buy the train ticket and berth, and allow for all meals en route, with no tips to anybody, for tipping is a useless habit, uneconomic, and conducive to sycophancy.

This series of Harvard stories began in the first June POPULAR.

Next Monday morning, he said, the brewery whistle would blow as usual at seven o'clock, and, when it did, Roger ought to be standing just where he could put out his right hand to punch the time recorder. The following Saturday afternoon he would receive a little yellow envelope containing six dollars—and they'd all try to forget that Roger was handicapped by nearly two years' association with a pack of young reprobates. They'd try not to be prejudiced against him on that account.

If it had been a sincere prohibition club, he said, that would have been different; but when Roger allowed his name to be connected with a sodality which made a laughingstock of Ward's malted products, brought himself to ridicule, and proved only too clearly that Roger was frittering away his time with athletes—which all the world knows are the mere chaff of the colleges—that meant the end. Signed, not affectionately, nor sincerely, nor yet very truly—simply "Your Father," with a terribly angry scrawl terminating in a pen thrust which tore a hole in the stationery.

Now, a year and a half in Cambridge had unquestionably made Roger careless in at least one respect. His cash accounts balanced to a penny; his daily reports left not one swing of the pendulum unrecorded; his habits, in spite of what his father thought, were remarkably regular if you remember that he was a perfectly normal young man—but he never opened his father's letters when they first arrived, because they generally came on the morning mail, and there was no sense in spoiling a whole day. He read them just before he went to bed, so that he could forget the unpleasant parts by the simple expedient of going to sleep.

On the present occasion, however, he was misled by the obvious presence of an inclosure—a thin slip of paper which rustled pleasantly. He went for it, wondering if the millennium had come and the brewer had sent along an extra check; and twenty minutes later he was still staring at the summons home and at the newspaper clipping, when Pepper McHenry wandered into his room and hailed him cheerfully.

"Well, old gazabo," said the McHenry, "you look worse than you feel, I'll bet my hat! What's the matter—going to be shot at sunrise?"

Roger handed him the letter and the clipping, and tried to fill a pipe, although his hands trembled so that he spilled most of the tobacco on his knees.

"I suppose it was only a question of time, anyway," he opined dully. "It's always been more or less of a row; but I never thought he'd get *this* far!"

McHenry glanced through the epistle, scrutinized the wildly imaginative newspaper story, sat down, and whistled.

"Christmas! Well, that *is* a hot one! Now you want to write back a perfect whale of an answer. I've seen these things before; got one myself freshman year. You want to explain the whole thing. Point out the joke, you know——"

"Don't waste your breath," said Roger bitterly. "You don't know my dad. I guess I don't, either. Only, all the letters in the world wouldn't make any difference after he's made up his mind. It was only a question of time, anyway."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well," hesitated Roger, "it was a bad start, Pep. You see, my dad's been disappointed in me right from the beginning. He didn't like my name; he had a row with mother about that. Then there was another fight when she wanted me to go to an academy, and he wanted me to go to high school. Then we had a scrap about my playing

football. Then he'd decided I'd go to the State university, and I wanted to come here. Then he was absolutely set on my being a lawyer; he's never forgiven me for what I said about it. So the only thing he could do was to let me come here, and take darned good care I worked all the time. If I wrote home that I'd been in town for dinner with you fellows I'd get back seven or eight pages about it. Midyears freshman year I had four A's and one B; and he roared like a hyena about the B, and said the A's were probably all cinch courses at that. Then at that show last year, when the lines were full of insults about this joint, and some of the crowd hissed the actors off the stage and fired lemons at 'em, I was pinched, of course; and the fact that the judge discharged me because I proved I didn't fire a single lemon didn't make the slightest difference with dad. He said that if I ever got my name in print again except in a scholarship list he'd pull me back home and start me to work. He's been looking for a chance for over a year, and now he's found it. That's all!"

"When are you—going?"

"Going!" flashed Roger. "I'm not going!"

"You're not?"

"You bet your neck I'm not! What do you take me for, McHenry? Of course I'm not going!"

"But—naturally he wouldn't send you any more money——"

"Well, do you think I'd take it if he did? But don't fool yourself for one single minute, Pep. I'm going to stay right here and take my degree whether he likes it or not! Plenty of poor men's sons work their way through Harvard. I don't see why a rich man's son can't do it once in a while!"

"Bully!" said McHenry appreciatively. "What are you going to do?"

Roger grinned, and made a wry face. "Hanged if *I* know," he admitted. "But I'm going to make good, Pep. I've got some junk I can sell; there's that phonograph I got last Christmas, and a fur coat; and I suppose I can tutor a bit."

"The woods are full of tutors," deprecated McHenry. "That is, unless you're a wizard."

"Well, I might scare up some new idea——" McHenry's upraised hand stopped him.

"Wait a second, just a second," said McHenry softly. "You can't mow lawns for a living, Roger; you aren't that kind. You've got to cash in on your scholarship standing; you've got to use your noddle. Let's see—on this tutoring question——" He was silent for so long a time that Roger felt constrained to prompt him. "Just a second, boy! I've got it! By gosh! It's a corker! You'll make a fortune! It's tutoring, but it's a *new* one!" He rushed over and began to pump Roger's hand excitedly. "Congratulations, old top!" he yelled. "You're a wonder!"

"Wha—what is it?"

"What is it? Why, you poor simp, it's the phonograph! Only, I'm afraid you *will* have to hock your fur coat to get working capital!"

"Spring it!" commanded Roger eagerly. "And—and who wants a fur overcoat in March, anyway?"

II.

Of course it was all over college in about two days. It wasn't particularly pleasant for Roger to walk down Mt. Auburn Street and know that every man he passed was regarding him as the paradox of the decade, and it was still less pleasant for him to be interrogated by some of his less tactful friends.

Obeying McHenry's sage advice, he told no more than was absolutely necessary; that he expected to work his way for the next two years, and that he didn't want people to think he didn't need the

money simply because somebody else had paid his bills up to this point. He didn't say that his father had written him to the effect that he could go where the fire department is ineffectual.

His room rent was paid to the end of the year, so that whether he left college or not there would be no rebate accruing to his male parent on his father's side, whereby he felt no qualms of conscience in keeping the room.

He sold his furniture, sent the brewer a money order for the correct amount, and picked up enough pieces from a secondhand shop to insure him a place to sleep and a desk at which to work. He sold the fur coat to Monk Spinden, and Monk insisted on his taking it back and raffling it, which was far more satisfactory to all concerned; for Roger netted a hundred and seventy dollars, and Monk won the coat, anyway, on a dollar ticket.

Then Roger and McHenry got leave of absence for a few days, and returned to Cambridge, uncommunicative but elated. They were, said McHenry, about to put upon the market a proposition beside which wireless telegraphy, the steam railway, and the science of aviation would seem like the childish conceptions of the entering class at a Froebel kindergarten. It would be completed when it was finished, and it would be announced when it was advertised, and if anybody had any more questions of the same variety to ask, it might be better to elminate them from the system as soon as possible.

One evening some four weeks in advance of the final examination period, Billy Murchison was roaming around Mt. Auburn Street looking for company when he discerned a light in Pepper McHenry's room and decided to run up for a moment.

It happened to be the particular night on which McHenry had decided to present the wonderful invention to a waiting world; and because it had seemed expedient to him to let the project insinuate itself into Harvard life rather than to force it, he had merely set the stage properly in his own room, provided smoking materials, and sat down to wait the first arrival.

He was fully conscious that the best possible publicity would arise from the conversation of the first visitor, so that he didn't much care who it was, although afterward he had to admit that Billy Murchison was an especially good visiting committee because he talked so much.

The door was closed and locked. As Murchison beat upon the panels he was suddenly aware of the phonograph, which McHenry must be playing to amuse himself, so he beat more insistently. The door opened; McHenry glared out at him, and then grinned.

"Oh—come on in, Bill! Wait a second until I choke off this machine."

"Oh, don't stop on my account," said Billy hastily. "Got any Bert Williams?"

"Lord, no! I haven't time for that sort of rot!" He stopped the motor, but not before Murchison heard something which caused him to ruffle his forehead perplexedly. He walked over to the phonograph and examined it with great interest.

"What sort of hocus-pocus is this?" he demanded. "If that wasn't something about producers' goods and consumers' goods, I'm a liar!"

"Far be it from me to say you're a liar, Bill," said Pepper complacently. "If you ask me as man to man, I'd say that's Ec 1."

"*Ec* 1—on a phonograph!"

"Sounds all right to me," stated McHenry. "Besides, look what she saves in seminar fees."

"For the love of Mike!" breathed Murchison, inspecting the machine professionally. "Where did you get that thing?"

"Roger Ward got it up. Rather

clever, I call it. You see, it's like this. Lots of fellows get along fairly well through the year, but when it gets around exam time, they all trail over to the Widow's and pay big prices for a seminar. Now what *is* a seminar? Absolutely nothing but the Widow giving a complete résumé of a course in three or four hours; and if you want to brace up on all your courses, you've got to spend the best part of a week up in the Widow's joint, and hand him about thirty dollars. And if you get sleepy about ten o'clock and miss any of his dope, it's hopelessly gone, just as if you'd cut a couple of lectures."

"You're darned whistling, old top!" exclaimed Murchison. "The last time I went to the Widow's I slept clear through a Comp Lit 2 seminar——"

"Exactly. Well, of course you know that Roger's working his way now, and about all he can do is to tutor——"

"The deuce it is! Somebody I know went over to see him a couple of days ago about tutoring, and Roger said he was too busy!"

"I shouldn't wonder," agreed Pepper. "His scheme is this: Instead of paying the Widow a five-spot, you pay him two and a half and get the use of a phonographic seminar——"

"A *what?*"

McHenry pointed to the small box full of wax records which reposed on his window seat.

"There you are," he said. "Here's Ec 1—complete brief, résumé, seminar, synopsis—call it anything you want to—of the whole blamed course. I paid Roger two and a half for a set of this stuff for a week. I soak in so so much Ec that I couldn't flunk that exam if I tried. And if I get drowsy, I simply stop the record, go out and take a walk, come back, and turn her on again. It's a cinch. Same ground the Widow would cover at half the price—and you can keep it a week."

"Murder and sudden death!" ejaculated Murchison in amazement. "Holy Moses! What a scheme!"

"The point is, I hope you notice, that it saves money for us, and makes more for Roger, because he's got I don't know how many courses on his list, and a whale of a lot of sets of records. All the big lecture courses in Ec and Gov and Phil, and the freshman courses in English A and German A—everything Roger ever took, and, of course, he got A's in everything. Why, these Ec records of his have given me more real dope in half an hour than I got out of section meetings all year!"

"But I haven't got a phonograph," wailed Murchison. "That sounds fine—I'd like to take a look at Fine Arts 1 myself, but I haven't got a phonograph."

"Hist!" said McHenry, affecting tremendous secrecy. "It isn't out yet, but it might be to-morrow or next day—I don't think Roger'd mind if I told *you*—but Roger's got the Cambridge agency for these machines, and you can buy one if you want to—and, of course, you could put in a stock of regular records just for fun, all the grand-opera stuff, and Bert Williams, if you're so keen for him—or he'll rent you one for a week or two while you're taking a seminar. It's—it's like a correspondence school, in a way."

"My gosh!" chattered Murchison. "That's a brand-new one! That's a pippin! But—but where does Roger get off if a couple of dozen fellows all use the same machine and the same records? Why couldn't you simply turn one loose in a room and let a whole crowd come in?"

McHenry shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course," he alleged, "that's up to the honesty of the fellows. The price is two-fifty a person, and if, say, six men listened to the stuff at the same time, each one of them ought to cough up to Roger, so he'd take eighteen dollars out of the crowd."

"It seems to me that some fellows might take advantage of him," said Murchison slowly.

"I doubt it. And here's another scheme. If a crowd wants to get together on a course, and they'll each pay a dollar extra, Roger'll come around, too, and then if anybody wants to ask any questions, he'll stop the machine and explain until the cows come home. Even then the fellows would be getting the Widow's service at a dollar and a half under his price."

"But—how will people know Roger's capable of handing out stuff like this? I mean, what's the guarantee that it's the right dope?"

"Look here, boy," reproached McHenry, "if people would be willing to fork out five dollars an hour to Roger Ward to sit down at the same desk with him and get tutored by word of mouth, they ought to see that there isn't such a whale of a lot of difference between that and listening to Roger Ward through a phonograph! And Roger's price for straight man-to-man tutorting is five an hour. It's high, but he's worth it. Why, in two years he's had all A's but one! He'll be a *summa cum* as sure as fate! What's the matter with it?"

"Turn on the juice and let's listen to it," commanded Murchison, helping himself to one of the carefully planted cigarettes.

The motor stirred, and began to hum steadily. McHenry allowed the reproducing needle to touch the waxen surface, and immediately the voice of Roger Ward intoned a cardinal principle of political economy.

"Now we're going to talk about wages," said Ward's calm voice. "Adam Smith said that wages ought to be just enough to let the workman live. John Stuart Mill thought that as long as labor produces the goods, laborers ought to be paid enough so they don't need to work at all. In other words—and this ought to tickle the examiner if you get it down—Smith said the wage earner ought to get just enough to live on, and Mill thought he ought to have enough to loaf on——"

"Stop the ship!" said Billy Murchison. "Say, that's an idea and a half! This Ward guy is *clever!* I wonder if that's his own line of drip? It's better than Taussig's!"

"It's his own stuff," declared McHenry mendaciously, for some of it was McHenry's own. "And the rest of his courses are as good as Ec 1. And here's something else: Next year Roger's going to run a sort of lecture service right through the year. Suppose you're taking Phil A, for example. Well, you pay Roger twenty-five dollars the first of the year, and every two weeks you get a couple of records containing a general summary of what's gone before. It'll be a lot better than your section meetings, because it won't contain anything that isn't important enough to be on one of the exam papers. Rather a neat stunt, I call it."

"Do you suppose Roger's in his room to-night?" queried Murchison. "I was going to blow in a wad on the Widow's seminars for the finals, but if Roger can hand me out the particular kind of Fine Arts bunk I need—at half the Widow's price—I'm hanged if I don't give him a try!"

"Go on over and see," suggested McHenry.

As soon as Murchison was out of the room he hastily substituted a Government 1 record for that of Economics, and held the trap ready for the next victim. The next victim wasn't long in arriving, for Murchison had stopped three times on the way to Roger Ward's to tell people about it; and when he banged on McHenry's door, he found it locked, and heard the metallic intonation of the phonograph explaining the constructive difference between the German Reichstag and the United States

Senate. It was a great night for McHenry.

III.

At opposite sides of Roger Ward's study table sat Ward and McHenry, and in the battered morris chair before the fireplace reclined a cadaverous young man who held the reputation of being one of the crack tutors of Cambridge. He was a graduate of six or seven years' standing, and he maintained a small establishment, a sort of cramming school, which stood second in importance to the Widow's, and was supposed to be making nearly as much money. He had stated his case, and he was waiting for the verdict.

"If you want to know what *I* think," said McHenry decisively, "*I* think the price is a blamed sight too low, Roger. Why, look here! The total running expenses of that one room in the post-office block don't amount to more than fifty dollars a month! We've sold outright nearly thirty machines—and two of 'em were big fellows that netted a hundred per cent! We haven't carried a stock of records of regular music and stuff, but we've ordered 'em in from the Boston distributing station as fellows wanted 'em. They've paid a net profit from the first day! And Roger made all the seminar records, and there's pretty close to two hundred of 'em in use now—at two and a half apiece! And besides, Mr. French, you've got to remember that we've got the only license there is for making records! It took a fearful nerve on our part and a million dollars worth of talk, and three solid days of cuts, before we put it over! This thing stands us in darned close to two thousand dollars profit—and you talk about offering a thousand! It's—it's ridiculous!"

"You fellows have knocked the bottom out of the tutoring business," conceded the cadaverous young man. "I had four freshmen for my last English A seminar, and I used to have forty. There was a gentleman's agreement among the tutors to maintain prices until you came along."

"You'd better listen to our third record in the Ec 1 series," retorted Pepper. "Roger—I mean we absolutely prove that price maintenance isn't logical! I never saw it myself until—well, anyway, we don't believe in restraint of trade!"

Mr. French snorted.

"You seem to forget that next year your scheme won't be worth thirty cents," he assured them. "We'll cook up something that'll make your records a drug in the market! Records take up too much room; and men can get together and use one set——"

"Listen to our fourth cylinder on supply and demand," counseled McHenry.

"Twelve hundred for your stock and the transfer of your license, and your agency," offered Mr. French, wincing as though it hurt him.

"You can laugh if you want to, Roger," said McHenry to his friend.

"But Mr. McHenry——"

"I'll tell you what we'll do," interrupted Roger, struck with a sudden brilliant idea. "You see, Mr. French, so many men have subscribed for these seminars of mine that they're rather well known. Now I wouldn't want *you* to make capital out of my individual work. What'll you give for the agency and the rights to make records, and everything but the stock on hand?"

"Why, the stock on hand is *vital*——"

"And yet," McHenry reminded him, "you said a couple of minutes ago that next year it would be a drug in the market!"

The cadaverous young man wriggled in the morris chair.

"Well, what's *your* price?"

"Two thousand," said Pepper promptly, "plus a royalty."

"A *royalty!*"

"Sure a royalty! A royalty of—well, let's say ten cents on every record you turn out!"

"But, my dear fellow, at only two dollars and a half for a set of *at least* twelve records—and a ten-cent royalty would cut that in half——"

"But, my dear fellow," retorted McHenry, "it seems to me you've been howling a lot about cutting the price! Don't try to kid us into believing that you aren't going to raise it!"

"My idea," explained the young man stiffly," was based on sound economic principles—to sell the product for more than it costs us to make it."

"Same on this end," said Roger. "Hence our price."

"I'll make it fifteen hundred!"

"You'll make me giggle," said McHenry pointedly. "Two thousand plus a royalty. Why, man, nothing like this has ever been pulled off *anywhere* before! It's an innovation! Think of it! Do what you like during the year, and then have an automatic instructor come and sit in your own room for two weeks before the finals, and give you the gist of any course you want—and if you want to pay a little extra for it, the gist of all the prescribed reading, too! And if *you* took hold of it, you could do all sorts of stunts! You could give every course in college, because you've got assistants in your shop who naturally know a pile more than Roger—than we do! It's a mint!"

"Eighteen hundred for the whole thing is the limit," insisted Mr. French, and McHenry, gazing at him thoughtfully, saw that he showed no signs of intention to depart. McHenry winked at Roger and yawned ostentatiously.

"Mr. French," he said," we're not business men, you know. We're just in college. I'm helping Roger work out a plan to make a little wad. We don't know how to bicker over prices; and besides, I've got a date. If Roger can get enough out of this scheme to let him stay in college two more years without working, we'll sell—otherwise not. Is it eight o'clock yet, Roger?"

Mr. French was pondering very diligently; and as he pondered he consulted the tablets of his memory, which advised him that the final examination period had so far been a dead loss to him, and that phonographic seminars were likely to ruin his business completely in another year. Furthermore, there was the undeveloped field of foreign languages, the possibility of profit on the agency, and a golden opportunity to make a national mail-order enterprise out of the conception of a university education on phonograph records! Was the privilege worth two thousand dollars, when Roger Ward's organization had already cut into his seminar receipts by seven or eight hundred in one month?

"Two thousand *without* royalty would be a different matter," he hesitated.

"Ten cents royalty, or nothing doing," was Pepper's ultimatum. The cadaverous young man sighed.

"All right," he said. "I'll take you!"

A very few moments later McHenry and Ward sat alone, and between them on the table lay a check, as guarantee of good faith, and a written agreement which covered all the conditions which Pepper's fertile imagination could suggest or Roger's native caution could infer. One of the young men was smiling beatifically—but Pepper was glum and downcast.

"What in thunder is the matter with you, McHenry?" demanded his friend. "I thought you thought it was a good sale?"

Pepper shook his head soberly.

"Dog-gone it!" he murmured. "It was so easy there wasn't any fun in it!" He brightened suddenly. "Well," he added, with more vivacity, "two thousand isn't much, Roger. Perhaps it isn't as hopeless as I'd thought! No, come

to think of it, I guess it isn't! I've got an idea to take that two thousand and make four out of it——"

"Pepper!"

"And if that guy wants to take over the shop to-morrow, I suppose we ought to clean up a bit first. Have you got the key? I must have lost mine. No, don't come with me, if you don't mind, old scout. I want to make one last record all by myself before we quit!"

IV.

A very fierce-looking old gentleman in a silk hat and costume to match paused irresolutely before the door of a certain room in Matthews, and finally, after examining with great care the visiting card tacked upon it with a tenpenny nail, whacked vigorously on the doorknob with his malacca cane.

"Let her run!" said a lazy voice from the interior, and the old gentleman, construing this as an invitation to enter, proceeded to accept it. The sight which met his eyes was to him typical of the life of any university. Seated in a decrepit morris chair, with his feet on the table, was a young man, utterly throwing away precious minutes in the perusal of a more or less worthless and frivolous publication called the *Lampoon*.

"The card said Roger Ward," growled the old gentleman, in threat rather than apology.

"Right-o," agreed the occupant of the room, removing his feet from the table. "Only he's out just at present. Anything I can do for you?"

"When'll he be back?"

"I really don't know. He's so busy these days——"

"Busy!"

"That's it exactly. Busiest man I know."

"Busy sitting on a fence singing fool college songs, I suppose——"

"This isn't New Haven," the young man corrected him. "We haven't any fences to sit on. And he's too busy to sit on 'em if we did. No, he's out looking after his business interests."

"B-business interests!" spluttered the fierce old gentleman. "P-poppycock, sir! What business interests can a boy like him have!"

"Well, he has—his printing company, and——"

"His what?"

"Printing company. You don't know him, then? Why, none of the college papers but the *Crime*—the *Crimson*, I mean—has a plant of its own, and the other four were all printed by different job printers around town; and Roger saw a chance to get together and make some money, so he's incorporating a little company to do the whole business, and save the papers ten or fifteen per cent over what they were paying——"

"Impossible, sir, impossible! Why, he doesn't know the first thing about the printing business!"

"Oh, no, but he's putting up the money. It's a sure thing. And then he's got hold of the Register."

"The what?"

"The Register. It's a book with the directory of the university, all the students, and their clubs, and that sort of thing, and all the athletic records from the year one. It's been frightfully manhandled, so he didn't have to pay much for the copyright, and it ought to net a couple of thousand."

"Oh, impossible!" whispered the old gentleman.

"Yes, sir! And then of course there's the novelty business."

"The *what?*"

"Great idea," said the young man proudly. "Dance orders and badges for the games, and class buttons, and that sort of thing. No work and a good commission. Around this time of year it keeps him busy simply writing out the orders."

"But—but——"

"I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me, Mr. Ward," said McHenry hastily. "Unless I'm very much mistaken I hear Roger beating it upstairs now—I'm glad to meet you——"

"Hold on!" bawled the old gentleman. "Hey! Hold on!"

But just here the door burst open, and Roger, halting as though spellbound on the threshold, emitted a whoop of delight and then leaped for his male parent on his father's side. It was all McHenry could do to make his escape without overhearing any of the resultant conversation. He would have given half his month's allowance to stay, but he didn't think it was right. Besides, it was nearly dinner time.

For two days McHenry avoided Matthews Hall as though it harbored the plague, and during this time he also sedulously avoided those places which Roger Ward ever honored with his presence. He was very fond of Roger Ward, but he had taken an immediate dislike to his father, and was afraid that if he met him again, he might be tempted to utter a few sincere thoughts which wouldn't make for close friendship between them. It wasn't until the third day that Roger located him, cornered him, and forced him to stand and hear the narrative.

"By gosh!" said Roger dazedly, "I'm still trying to make it out, Pep! You could have knocked me over with a feather. A couple of months ago he told me never to darken his doors again and that I was a disgrace to the family, and he never cared if I wrote to him or not, and this afternoon dad simply breezed up to me, and pretty nearly took my hand off and began shooting questions at me so fast that I couldn't half understand 'em, let alone answer 'em. He wanted to know where I got the money to start with, and all about the phonograph business and the printing scheme and the Register—how much I'd made, and how much I expected to make—and then all about you. You must have made a fearful hit with dad——"

"He didn't even know who I was," scoffed McHenry.

"No, but he seemed to know a lot about you somehow. At least, when I told him you thought up the phonograph stunt, and the combination of print shops, he said he thought you'd probably be that sort of young man——"

"Funny how news travels," said Pepper modestly.

"Well, the funniest thing is that he crawled completely on that Prohibition Club affair. I can't get it at all! Said he might have been mistaken—maybe it was a joke, after all. Then he sprung this one: He said it was a lot worse for a son of his to be working his way through college than it would have been if I'd intended to knock his business through the Prohibition Club. He said he simply wouldn't stand for it. It seems he's changed his mind about a lot of things. Admitted he hadn't understood me very well—hadn't thought I was capable of handling money, and all that, and now he seems to think I'm something of a business man. Well, the whole story is that he wants me to quit all the things I've worked up, Pep, and go back on an allowance."

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed McHenry. "You're not going to, are you?" Roger grinned feebly.

"Well," he admitted, "I thought perhaps it does look queer for the son of a fairly wealthy man to work when he doesn't have to. It's what we'd have called uneconomic in our records, Pep. It certainly does take money away from fellows who need it. I was only working so as to stay in college, Pep. And if he honestly wants me to take an allowance—it's to be just three times as big as it was before—I—don't—know——"

McHenry exhaled disgustedly.

"Darn it!" he exploded. "Every time

I get a man to working out any of my pet stunts, something happens to queer it! You're not honestly going back to sponging, are you? After the way we're walking through Cambridge like Coxey's army!"

"He says it'll hurt his reputation," defended Roger. "And after all, Pep, I've got to think of his feelings. He's my father, you know."

"So you're going to quit?"

"Yes, Pepper," apologized his friend. "I'm rather sorry. I was having a whale of a good time, and I'd have made a bunch of money next year, but I'm going to sell out everything—it ought to bring me about three thousand—and quit."

"Just because your dad wants you to!"

"Yes, Pepper, just because my dad wants me to."

"You're a coward!" said McHenry.

"Well—in a way he's right. You've got to admit it. If he's willing to pay my expenses again, I ought not to take business away from the poor boys who need the money. I thought I'd see if I couldn't help out a lot of 'em——"

"Great!" said McHenry. "That's a great idea! I've got a lot of ideas! I'm with you, Roger!"

"Still," continued his friend, "there's two things I can't make out even yet. One of 'em is why he came on here at all, and the other is how he seems to know so much about you. He certainly didn't recognize you there in my room, and yet every time I mentioned you he seemed to think a lot of you. Where did you ever meet him?"

Pepper grinned, and prepared to dodge.

"I'll tell you the truth," he promised. "Remember that night when French bought out the phonograph business? And I said I wanted to go over to our little shop alone to make one set of records all by myself? Well, you'd told me you have a machine at home. So I just naturally went over there and filled up three records with what I thought about him and what a corker you are, and sent 'em to him. I told him how much money you were making and all that—and I knew blamed well he'd listen to a phonograph record when he might not have read a letter. It's the novelty—you know. It was pretty strong stuff, Roger, but I had a hunch he might be wavering a bit, so I took a chance. And now," he finished rather bitterly, "after I've spent all that time heaping coals of fire on his head, you go back and take his tainted old allowance! Roger, you make me sick!" He turned and hesitated. "But as long as you're going to do it," he said, "I wonder if you could let me have, say, twenty-five of 'em until, say, Saturday afternoon."

"Twenty-five? Is that enough?

"Plenty," McHenry told him firmly. "Twenty-five is exactly what I need. I'm sort of shy in Gov 8, old top, so I thought I'd subscribe to one of French's courses on the phonograph! Didn't you ever hear of poetic justice?"

"And you—you filled up three records about me, and sent 'em out to my dad!" gasped Roger, who hadn't until now fully comprehended McHenry's meaning. The imperturbable Pepper nodded, and suddenly raised a significant forefinger.

"Oh—make it twenty-seven if you don't mind, old gazabo. I forgot—I sent the blamed things prepaid, but I didn't have the two iron men, so I told the expressman I'd come in and pay some time when I thought of it. Gee!" he murmured. "Isn't it astonishing how much a fellow can accomplish on his nerve!"

Holworthy Hall's next story is entitled "Social Service." It will appear in the first September POPULAR, on sale August 7th.

Jack Rabbit Shade

By George Pattullo

Author of "The Sheriff of Badger," "The Southpaw Meteor," Etc.

Some are born ball players, some achieve baseball, and some have baseball thrust upon them. In the first category belongs Shade, lazy, shiftless, and a shirk when at work on the woodpile or the grocery store, but a metamorphosed youngster astonishingly alert when he gripped a five-ounce ball in his fist

SHADE!" bawled his father from the stoop. "Where are you? Consarn, I swan that boy makes me mad sometimes! Sha-ade! Oh, Shade!"

An overgrown, gawky boy slouched around the corner of the house, nursing a ball in the hollow of a mitt. His face was an inspiring brick red; flakes of skin were peeling from his nose like old paper from a damp wall. Failing to perceive him, Mr. Selman howled again: "Sha-ade!" And the lad answered sullenly at his elbow: "Here!"

His sire turned on him in intense exasperation.

"I've a good mind," he declared, with a rasp in his tone, "to tan you good! What were you doing?"

"Nothin'."

"Well, don't ever let me catch you doing it again," warned his father.

The son made no reply, but waited, with downcast eyes, for more—he had grown to expect considerable when once the "ol' man" got wound up. And Selman, senior, did not disappoint him.

Said he: "What the Sam Hill you're good for I don't know. Quit shufflin' your feet. You just get meaner every day. You won't work. Here I've found you three jobs, and you done lost 'em all. I reckon you're just no-account."

Back and forth, from one hand to the other, went the ball.

"Why don't you say something?"

The boy lifted his sulky glance rebelliously.

"If you and Miz Selman——" he began.

"Who?"—with a threatening forward movement.

"You and ma," Shade corrected. Only under compulsion would he accord to his stepmother anything but "Miz," which is Southwestern for Mrs.

"Well, what about me and ma?"

"If you'd just leave me be sometimes," pleaded Shade. "If you'd only give me half a chance."

His voice trailed off as he saw the passion working in his father's face, and he ducked swiftly. Just in time, for Selman's open hand swung above him where Shade's head had been.

"You whelp! I'll learn you to talk back to me."

Shade did not tarry to explain or expostulate, but from his stooping posture sprinted for the road as hard as he could go. Mr. Selman pursued only as far as the gate, where he cast about for a stone or a bit of wood. Finding none, he bellowed after his son: "I'll whale you for this. Don't you go for to think I'll forget. Go and draw some water for your ma, do you hear me? And when you've

done that, pile that stove wood. Mind now!"

His father retired, and Shade, having made sure that he was really inside and was not simply employing a ruse to trap him, went to the well and filled a bucket. He did not carry it into the house, however, but cautiously deposited it close to the kitchen door. Then, retreating to the road, he called: "There it is!"

After a while, mindful of parental threats, he reëntered the yard and set to work on the woodpile. But his heart was not in it—he dawdled and fussed, and presently sat down on the sawhorse to think. Perhaps Shade was afflicted with the hookworm, that scourge of the South which has given Mr. Rockefeller so grave concern; or it may be he was merely lazy. It all depends on the angle from which you view human frailty.

Hookworm or laziness, he did not stick at the task.

"I'll be dogged if I do!" he broke out. "I ain't going to put in my whole life pilin' wood and weedin' and pickin' cotton."

A tin can on a fence post caught his eye.

"I'll bet"—apostrophizing the can—"that I hit you nine times out of ten."

And he commenced to gather stones, selecting them with care. The distance was about twenty yards. Shade poised and flung the first, and the jangle roused his father from perusal of the Texas almanac. He laid it down to listen.

One, two, three, four—a pause that registered a miss—five, six—the elder Selman directed a look of understanding at his wife, and stole softly into the back yard. There was his hopeful heir raining stones at a tomato tin.

"Twenty-two," he grunted as his father watched, "twenty-three, and twenty-four——"

"So!" The forced calm of the monosyllable carried the snap of a command. It brought Shade up short, with his arm out behind him for the throw.

"So!" repeated his father. "That's the way you pile wood, is it?"

The boy let the stone drop from his nerveless fingers, and picked his cap from the ground.

"Come here!" Selman ordered.

Shade was about to obey; indeed, he advanced a few steps, then stopped.

"If you think you're going to lick me," he announced sullenly, "you ain't!"

"What?" Had his house come clattering about his ears, Selman, senior, could not have been more dumfounded.

"No," said Shade again, "you ain't!"

There could be only one answer to this defiance. Without a word, the father lunged for him, and Shade dodged and ran. As he sped through the gate he swung it to behind him, so that Mr. Selman was caught amidship by the crossbar and gave up the chase very abruptly.

"You wait till to-night!" he shouted, when he had got his breath back. "That's all! You'll get what!"

The night being still some hours off, Shade did not wait for it, but started toward the village, sniffling as he trudged along the dusty pike. He bought some crackers and sardines at the general store for fifteen cents—the only money he had handled in a month—and sat down under the wooden awning to eat.

There being nothing else to engage him, the owner came out to gossip. The unusual character of the purchase puzzled Uncle Ben. After some minutes devoted to wordless admiration of the boy's appetite, he remarked that it struck him as right curious Shade should be spending all that money for a meal when he might be getting his victuals at home for nothing.

"Uh-uh!"—through a mouthful of crackers. "I couldn't. 'Cause why? Because I ain't a-going home no more,

Uncle Ben. This is my last day in Windy City."

Uncle Ben ceased whittling to gape at him.

"Lands sakes, Shade, what's got into you?"

"I'm all right, Uncle Ben. But I don't aim to let pa hound me round no more. That's all. He's fixing to do it right now. So I ain't going home."

Uncle Ben's chin whisker wabbled in his agitation, and he spat vigorously into the road.

"And where," he queried, "do you aim to go, Shade, boy?"

"Dunno," was the reckless answer. "Only it'll be just as far away from Windy City as I can get."

The storekeeper leaned forward and addressed Shade with extraordinary earnestness.

"Don't you do it, son! No, sir, don't you budge a foot. There're worse places that li'l' ol' Windy, Shade—you can bet there is. I know how you feel—yes, I do—I was that way myself once. But cities is hell—just hell."

"Who said anything about cities?"

"I know, I know. That's where every young feller pines to go. But you listen to me—don't you do it. I tried it once—yes, sir, went clear to Fort Worth. And do you know what happened?"

His tone was so tragic that Shade felt constrained to make a reply and muttered: "No, what?"

"Why," said Uncle Ben, "a dog-gone feller sold me the city hall for nine dollars cash. That's what he done."

This was a body blow, and Uncle Ben followed it up with others. Before he had finished the last cracker and another tin of sardines donated by Uncle Ben in the warmth of his excitement, Shade had promised to give up all present ideas of flight.

"Well," he said, "if I'm going to get it, better get it over with quick." And off he set toward home.

The boy did not resist the punishment. Not because of filial respect, but from bodily fear—he had tried it once, only to incite his burly father to a rage that left Shade sadly battered and bruised. Therefore, he stood grimly quiet while Selman, senior, plied a harness strap across his shoulders.

When he stopped, Shade drew on his vest, turning his back lest his father see the smarting tears of wounded pride he could not keep back, and went out of the woodshed and toward the village.

II.

Twilight found him pitching in a game of choose up sides—which is neither scrub nor four old cats, but a reliable makeshift—on a vacant plot next the church. Uncle Ben watched them from his door across the street.

This was Shade—yet it wasn't Shade. Nobody would have recognized in him the sulky, lethargic boy of the woodpile. As soon as he stepped to the mound he was transformed. His shoulders squared back; he lifted his feet as though they belonged to his legs instead of being dead weights, and his smile was three inches in width.

"He sure is on the job!" chuckled Uncle Ben.

Evidently the batters thought so, and feared him. No one would stand up to the plate. Invariably they backstepped when the ball shot toward them, and Shade retired them one, two, three.

"Ri-ide him, buster!" Uncle Ben would yelp, shrill as a coyote. "Ride him, Shade, boy!"

And Shade's exultation soared with each feat.

"What're you scared of?" he asked with a grin, hurling a high one so close to the batter's chin that the boy turned a pale green.

"Don't throw 'em so darned hard,

Shade! You'll hurt somebody. Just give me a slow curve and I'll show you what."

Owing to lack of players the bases could not be manned. With only eight men available—four a side—the custom was to place the two not required for battery in the most favorable positions for fielding. Then the runner took his chances. With no way of throwing him out except at the plate, they threw at him instead. If they missed him the runner was safe and made the circuit; if they hit him, he would know he was out. The ball, having seen much service, did not quite kill.

At the end of four innings, wearying of his easy triumph, Shade decided to let one hit it. Accordingly, he warned Shorty of a lob, and Shorty set himself and hammered it along the ground. With the smack of the bat on the ball, Shade made a running dive and scooped the grounder. Recovering with astonishing speed, he turned and shot the ball at the runner. It caught the lad in the back, just over the kidneys, and he collapsed in a heap.

Shade was first to reach him—a pallid-faced, voiceless, and agonized Shade—and he was first to do the doctor's behest when poor Shorty was carried senseless into the store. After what seemed an interminable age, Shorty opened his eyes and groaned.

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor in much relief. "He'll come round, all right. But it's no fault of yours you didn't kill him. You boys ought to know better."

Shade was too relieved to bother himself about excuses or to feel any resentment. Weak and shaking, he went home, and that night lay awake for hours, speculating on what might have been.

Next noon his father returned from work in a towering rage. He summoned Shade to the woodshed. The boy knew what that portended.

"So!" said he. "What's this I hear? You've been at it again, hey?"

"I didn't hurt him on purpose. It was an accident."

"Accident? I know you. It's just your cussed meanness. That's what it is. You hit that boy like you done on purpose—just to show off how hard you can throw."

Knowing the futility of argument when his father was in one of his black moods, Shade stirred a clump of dirt with his toe. His father began rolling up his sleeve.

"You ain't going to lick me again," Shade announced.

"I'm not, hey? I'm going to lick you within an inch of your life. We'll see whether that meanness will come out of you or not. I'll break your stubborn spirit. I'll either take it out of you or——"

He was rummaging behind a barrel for an ax handle, and in that moment Shade got into action. He darted through the door, overturning his dumfounded sire as he went, and sped toward town. Behind him his father raged, but he did not pursue far, for in respect to publicity the elder Selman had the usual villager's nice regard.

To the storekeeper Shade panted: "I'm going for keeps this time, Uncle Ben. He'll kill me sure, if he ever gets his hands on me after this, pa will."

And Uncle Ben, after listening to his recital, rejoined: "Oh, it's too bad, Shade; too bad! Consarn, I knowed what would happen when your pa married again. I said so to Mary Lou."

He showed irritability, for Uncle Ben was debating a point which required prompt decision.

"Well," he said at last, "if you've got to go, you've got to go. But be mighty careful, Shade, boy. And, listen—if you get into any jack pots, you just let your ol' Uncle Ben know. Mind now! Here! Take this!"

He thrust a five-dollar bill into Shade's reluctant palm.

"And, say"—the sacrifice made, Uncle Ben passed with relief to a subject he felt qualified to advise on—"if you should go to a city and any feller steps up who makes out like he knows you well and is an ol' friend of the family, you just fix your eye on him like this and say 'Rats!' See? Just like this—'Rats!' And he'll leave you be."

III.

Two weeks later, in the basement of the Hotel Arlington, at Tepid Wells, Shade removed his apron and took his cap from a nail in the wall. He was tired from a hard day of scrubbing and peeling vegetables and scouring pots. Yet there was a flicker of animation in him as he extracted a ball and glove from an empty packing case. He called out to the dishwasher: "Meet you outside, Andy."

"Sure, Mike!" yelled Andy from abysmal depths beyond. "I'll be through here in twenty minutes."

Shade waited in the lane back of the hotel until Andy joined him, when he gravely surrendered the glove to that flame-headed youth, who took up a crouching position, with his hands on his knees, as the receiving end of the partnership, and requested Shade to send him a hot one. Shade sent him several, winding up for his delivery with appalling contortions.

"The Gamecocks," said Andy, "get in to-night, Shade. Gee! Won't it be great? We'll be cleaning things for 'em to eat. Think of it! Say, don't send 'em in so swift."

But the news that the training season was on fired Shade. He delivered one with such speed that the doughty Andy wavered, jumped aside, and let it go by. The ball hit the ground, about ten yards from the mouth of the lane, and caromed straight into the ribs of a stocky individual who was passing along the street to the hotel.

"Hi!" he cried sharply, clapping a hand to his side.

"It was my fault, mister," piped Andy. "He threw me a hot one and I let it go by."

And then he almost collapsed, suddenly recognizing the stranger. How often had Andy studied those harsh lineaments in the sporting pages of the newspapers.

"Excuse us, Mr. Polk," he quavered. "We're sorry."

Polk! Standing back in the lane, Shade started as from an electric shock. Now he hurried forward with solicitous anxiety. Could this be Henry Polk, the Napoleon of baseball? Was this squat, square-shouldered, hard-jawed man the famous manager of the Gamecocks?

"We sure didn't aim to do it," he said fervently.

"You kids want to be more careful," was the rueful response. "There—that's all right. It only stung some. Here, you—here's your ball." He rubbed his side, and added: "Let's see you fling him one."

Shade's heart seemed to jump into his throat. Fling one? He was going to pitch under the eye of the grand mogul of baldom. For a second he went weak, feeling a trifle sick; then his pluck came to his relief, and he gave a hitch to his belt.

As they stationed themselves: "No, sirree!" said Polk.

"What's the matter?"

"You get at the other end," he commanded Andy. "I'd rather stand behind the big kid here."

The Gamecocks' manager did not blink an eyelash at the first three balls, but methodically chewed gum. After the fourth he glanced sharply at the youngster.

"Cut out all those false motions in your wind-up," he said curtly.

For the fifth, Shade served up the best he had, and his blood tingled to the roots of his hair when he heard a soft whistle behind him.

"What's your name?" demanded Polk. Next: "Where do you live?"

"In the hotel," said Shade. "But I just come. They've give me a job in the kitchen."

For a while the manager scanned him dubiously.

"Do you like it?"

"No-oo. But a man's got to make a livin'."

Polk grinned, and shot at him: "You look lazy."

"Yes, maybe I do," Shade admitted to his huge surprise. "And I reckon I *am* lazy, too. Leastways, pa said so, and I don't like to work. The only thing I like——"

"Well? Don't be bashful."

"Is baseball," said Shade.

"Humph!" said Polk.

He started out of the lane, but paused when he reached the sidewalk.

"Come to me in the morning," he rapped out, as though angry about something. "Perhaps I can find you a job you'll like better'n scrubbing."

The boy was too overcome to do anything but gulp. Before he could stammer his thanks the manager had turned into the hotel.

A job with the Gamecocks! In an instant the great wide world had changed—it was no longer cold, and drab and harsh, but warmly glowing, throbbing with hopes. To his side tiptoed Andy, stricken with an overwhelming awe.

"Gee!" he breathed. "You're a lucky slob, Shade. It's like they'll let you carry the bats some time maybe."

Carry the bats! Shade indulged in a pitying smile. And his air was insufferably complacent as he replied, in an even tone: "You ain't talking to me, Andy. Polk wants me for the team. Not right away maybe—but later. Yes, sir, I'll be a Gamecock yet."

IV.

If Polk intended to put Shade on the team, he certainly kept it a secret.

"You just hang round," was his order to the boy. "We can use you to run errands and the like."

To Shade the instructions seemed incomplete. He dallied with his hat, muttering something anent pay.

"You'll be paid, all right," said the amused manager. "Ten a week."

Ten dollars a week! It sounded like sinful riches to Shade, who gauged money by Windy City standards. Not a minute did he lose in throwing up his job.

"Don't quit till noon," his boss besought him, in sore disappointment. "I was fixing to fire you then anyhow."

And he was in an ill humor all day because the boy had beaten him to it. For Shade had exhibited the same enthusiasm in peeling vegetables and scrubbing the floors as he had in piling wood in his father's yard.

"His mind ain't on his bizziness a-tall," the cook had reported.

The moment he joined the Gamecocks a change was perceptible. His mind became fixed on his business, engrossed in it to the exclusion of every other consideration, although his exact status with them was first assistant to the water carrier, and general utility boy.

The job marked an awakening. His listlessness vanished. Perhaps the hookworm died; at any rate, he no longer mooned around like one with a grudge against mankind.

The following Sunday he wrote of his good fortune to Uncle Ben, partly in the secret hope that the storekeeper would spread the glad tidings to his parents' ears. Not that he wished to

ease their anxiety, but to rub it in. And Uncle Ben did his duty nobly. He bragged to half the county about Shade's scale of pay, so that before the story of his achievements had gone the rounds, the salary had leaped to eighteen hundred a year, and he was one of the mainstays of the Gamecocks' pitching staff.

Toward the members of the team Shade displayed a reverence that would have amused them mightily had it not been disconcerting—the sort of reverence one gives to national heroes and presidents and kings, and sometimes to holy things.

"He gets my goat!" confessed Ruef Page, whom Shade had been dumbly following around all morning like a faithful dog. Whatever the first baseman might be doing, Shade was certain to be near, staring worshipfully. In fact, his admiration for the star amounted to idolatry, and Ruef grew self-conscious under it. The boy was forever performing little acts of thoughtful service.

"To live up to that kid's idea of me, a fellow would have to act grand stand all the time," he railed. "And I just can't do it. Gee! I've got so I'm afraid to cuss out loud when he's around, Polk. Say, it must be fierce to be a king or a guy like that—what?"

The manager regarded him thoughtfully.

"Yes," he agreed, "I suppose so."

But as he walked away he said to himself: "Maybe the kid's a paying proposition."

For his brilliant first sacker required constant surveillance. Once fairly launched into the season he could be relied on to tread the straight path of his own accord, but in the spring he was woefully prone to slip and break training. And so, during the months spent in Texas, the manager had his weather eye constantly cocked for symptoms and was ever on the anxious seat.

On a day he called Shade to him in the hotel.

"Where's Page?" he asked.

"He done went to town about nine o'clock."

"Go and find him. And, listen—don't let him out of your sight. Notice anything queer about Ruef lately?"

The boy looked down at the floor in confusion and traced the pattern in the rug with his toe.

"Yes," he confessed, "he's been frettin' some the last few days. It looks like there's something on his mind, Mr. Polk."

"There is," said the manager. "You see if you can take it off. Find him and bring him here."

Shade found him in front of the Elk Horn Saloon—alone, which in itself was ominous—and Ruef was smoking a cigar. He rolled it savagely in his mouth as he stood on the curb, glaring with hostile eyes at everybody who passed. For Page was fighting his fight, and the grim internal struggle played the devil with his nerves.

Just as the boy edged up to him with the abashed, apologetic manner he showed toward the team, the first baseman cast his cigar away, wiped his lips, mouthed a cuss word, and, with a look of bitter determination, entered the saloon. He did not see Shade—did not know he was near until the boy jogged his elbow as he was pouring a drink. Then he did not turn, but stared wrathfully at him in the bar mirror.

"Well?" he asked, his fingers clutching the glass.

"Mr. Polk wants you."

Ruef flared into anger at that.

"You go back and tell 'Fatty' Polk I'll come when I'm good and ready. Did he send you out to look for me?"

"Yes, sir," Shade acknowledged.

"Well, now that you've found me,

you needn't wait. Beat it, kid. I'll be along soon."

But Shade did not budge. He stood gazing at the first sacker with such intensity of pleading that Ruef put down the glass, very slowly, and in anger. Whirling upon him, he almost shouted: "What the Sam Hill are you waiting for? Want a drink? Here, Joe, fetch him some soda pop!"

Joe's face was expressionless as he polished the bar with a towel. He made no move toward the soda pop.

"No, sir, I don't," said Shade.

Still he lingered. And still Ruef hesitated to toss off the dram, although he could not himself have explained why. His fingers nervously gripping the glass: "For two pins I'd lick you within an inch of your life, Shade."

All the nervous tension and irritability of a week's pent-up battle with his craving found expression in his voice. His eyes were glaring, and the perspiration stood in beads on forehead and cheek bones. Shade did not quail; instead, the other's fury seemed to act as a bracer to him, to give him poise.

"You can beat me to death right here on this spot, Mr. Page," he said simply, "if only you won't touch that booze." And he meant it.

Joe gently rubbed the bar with his towel. It was very much none of his business, but he hoped the big guy would have sense and take the kid's advice—for he knew the type, did the bartender.

A long minute of scrutiny—he was in two minds whether to fall upon him fists and feet—then Page swore and sent the glass crashing to the far end of the saloon.

"Come on, then!" he cried, striding out.

"Hey!" yelled the bartender. "None of that rough-house here, you big stew!"

Despite the disproportionate length of his legs, Shade had much ado to keep the first baseman in sight. Page would not walk with him, but struck straight for the hotel, there to vent his rage on the quietly smiling, unruffled, and thankful manager.

His anger against Shade endured for three days, finding an outlet in splenetic hostility to his presence. If the boy came near him Ruef would move away. Then, the craving passing, he grew self-contained—rather ashamed—finally placid.

"Say, kid," he called one afternoon, preliminary to a warming-up, "come here!"

Shade crossed to him, stumbling over his own toes with sheer joy as he went. His features were distorted by a foolish, propitiating grin.

Said the first baseman: "Go and get yourself a new outfit. See? Right from a hair cut to silk socks."

Dully Shade opened his fingers and looked at the crumpled bills that had been forced on him. He seemed almost ready to cry, but stiffened pridefully.

"No, thanks!" An interval to get a grip on his tones, then: "I couldn't take it, Mr. Page."

"Well," said Ruef, staring at him, "I'll be eternally dinged!"

Upon that he sprang from the bench and ran out to first base. Later that afternoon he came to Shade, squatting forlornly on the grass, trying to rebuild certain shattered ideals, to remold his world. Page had on a catcher's mitt and spat into it briskly.

"How," he inquired, "would you like to heave me a few, Shade?"

"Huh!" The boy seemed unable to comprehend the overture.

"Chief tells me you can fling a sizable curve, Shade. Like to hand me one? Perhaps I could teach you a few."

You should have seen Shade pounce on the ball.

V.

"It's a shame to keep him fooling around here, Henry."

"What'll we do with him, then? He's only a kid."

"He's nineteen," Page retorted, "and big for his age. To keep a boy who can pitch like this kid can carrying water and doing chores—why, he struck Frank out twice yesterday. He's got everything."

"But experience," said the manager dryly.

He drummed on the arm of his chair with his fingers and eyed a tall blond in a slit skirt, who was crossing the lobby.

"The woods down here are full of 'em," he murmured reflectively.

"Not like Shade, they aren't! No, sirree!"

"What? Who? Like Shade! Oh, aye—of course not." Polk brought his wandering attention to the subject in hand. "Well, what would you advise, Ruef?"

"Try him out in a bush league," said the first baseman earnestly. "Pick one you know—a manager who'll keep an eye on him. Let him learn."

Thus brought face to face with a problem that had vexed his soul in secret for a twelfthmonth, the manager fretfully shoved back his hat and said: "But he's lazy. He worked all last winter driving one of Stier's grocery wagons across the street, and Stier tells me he was asleep on the job about four out of the six months. It was the same the winter before, when I got him that job as bell hop."

Ruef permitted himself a smile of superior comprehension.

"Sure he was. And why? Because Shade is lazy at everything but baseball. I tell you, Henry, that boy was born for baseball—his heart's in it, and he won't half try at anything else. Shade's a genius—that's what he is! He cuts out everything that don't matter."

"Which just leaves baseball," commented the manager.

"Exactly—just baseball. But he sure can pitch, Polk—I never saw a boy with his speed. If he's handled right, he'll develop into another Walter Johnson."

"Oh, pshaw!" Polk scoffed. "So will every recruit who shoves his head above the tall grass."

He was tired of hearing prodigies touted and then having them blow up on him. Nevertheless, he conceded that it was a sin to keep Shade only half employed, doing jobs that could be performed by a capable nigger, when he might be using his undoubted talent and learning the game. Therefore he wired Seeley, manager of the Wild Cats, away out where the cactus stings the unwary, and Seeley wired back, and Shade Selman was farmed out to him.

If he had been going straight to the electric chair, Shade could not have appeared more glum. No condemned criminal ever slighted his last ham and eggs more shamefully than Shade did his breakfast that morning of parting.

"Cheer up, kid!" urged Ruef. "You'll come back. It's just for a year or two. It's just for the experience."

"Yes, I know," answered Shade, blowing his nose violently, "but I want to stay here."

When Chief Tarheel, the Gamecock catcher, heard of it, he grunted.

"That boy'll be back here inside a year," he prophesied, with a scornful glance over the squad, gamboling about. "Mark my words. He's got as much now, Henry, as any of these dubs—and then some."

VI.

About the middle of that season Seeley made a perfunctory report to Polk, placing it casually in a postscript

of a letter that rambled for three pages without getting anywhere.

"The boy's been a disappointment in some ways," he wrote. "For one thing, he's sulky and don't get on with the bunch very good."

"Glory be, what did you expect?" exclaimed Ruef Page, when he heard it. "Wouldn't it make an angel sour to go from us to those longhorns? Shade says—here's his letter to me—read it—Shade says they don't know baseball out there from duck on the rock."

Report number two drifted in after a few weeks.

Young Selman just dubs along. He won't try. He shows flash enough at odd times to hold his job—but, as a phenom, he's busted.

"I don't understand it," said Polk sorrowfully. "That doesn't sound like Shade at all, Ruef. I never thought he'd lay down. It's too bad."

"Too bad?" snorted the first sacker. "I tell you it isn't so. Who is this Seeley, anyhow? His reports don't listen like the local papers out there, from all I hear. Wait a while, Henry. There's a bug under the chip."

The bug crawled out next week when a night lettergram came to Polk.

Can unload young Selman on Fenner McGrady, of Benton Boosters, for a hundred dollars. Wire me his release.

At sight of this offer, both manager and first baseman expanded into grins. Page slapped a bundle of newspapers on to the table.

"Flash enough at odd times, hey? Well, I should worry now. Look! I sent for these. So he'll give a hundred for Shade, will he? Wow—he thinks there's straw in our hair. Listen here, Henry. That old fox never figured we'd see the dope, I bet."

His face shining with excitement, the first sacker spread out page after page of lurid sporting news.

"'Selman strikes out eleven,'" he read. "That was on the eighteenth. On the twenty-first—'Wild Cats' Wonder Holds Boosters Hitless.' Oh, maybe that's rotten—what? And, listen, Henry—jinks, this is some bear cat of a story!"

Ruef thrust out his chest, extended one long arm, and declaimed with the dramatic fervor of a July Fourth oration.

"Shade Selman has developed a new curve. And so he no longer goes by the cognomen of Shade, but Jack Rabbit—or Jack Rabbit Shade, if you like.

"Just how to describe this latest invention of the Wild Cats' infant marvel is a puzzle. It starts—well, anyhow, Shade says himself, with that slow grin of his, 'It's puttin' it where he ain't.' But Buck Weaver, who struck out four times yesterday, says it comes at you like a jack rabbit runs. Now, a jack rabbit is some dodger, and Mr. Weaver ought to know. So let it go at that."

The manager chuckled and reached for the pile of papers. His eyes were glinting.

"Let's see what the kid's doing," he said. "And say, Ruef, answer that wire for me."

Page took Chief Tarheel with him to send the telegram. Their reply went collect and threw Seeley into a lather. It was:

You can buy Shade Selman for ten thousand dollars.

VII.

Young Mr. Selman and his jack-rabbit curve formally joined the Gamecocks at the opening of the spring-training season, and what happened after that is fandom lore. Suffice that Mr. Buck Weaver flattered the jack-rabbit species.

We are concerned only with the third game of the championship series at the fag end of summer, when, with a lead of two games, Polk took a chance with the youngster and put him in against the slugging contenders for the pennant.

"What!" wailed the wise ones with

one voice. "He's going to pitch that kid? Good night! It's curtains now. Sure, he's good. But in a championship series! Why, he's bound to blow up—they'll beat him to a pulp."

To the press Polk explained serenely: "I've never seen anything yet that could scare the boy. If there's yellow in him, it'll come out now. Give him a fine hot day like he likes, and Jack Rabbit will win."

Twenty-seven thousand people parted from perfectly good dollars to see him try. And the bleachers roared a welcome that went tingling to the heavens. They liked Shade, and there was something about the big hulk that inspired confidence. He was no beauty to look at and tolerably awkward—but, Lawdy, couldn't he fling a ball! Besides, he was out there to win his spurs—it was the supreme test of his mettle. So, with a pleasant savor of adventure and all kinds of possibilities to the game, they stuck handkerchiefs inside their collars, yelled for peanuts, and settled jubilantly to watch. The day was hot.

"We've got 'em licked!" said the crafty Polk, as he surveyed the battleground. "The boy warmed up ninety horse power."

In one of the press boxes sat two gentlemen whose appearance focused the attention of near-by spectators. It bespoke remote regions far beyond Brooklyn. They were dressed regardlessly, but it stuck out all over them nevertheless—in spite of seventeen-dollar suits and new straw hats and clean celluloid collars.

One was Shade Selman's father; the other was Uncle Ben. How on earth they had contrived to get there nobody could tell with any degree of positiveness—Uncle Ben apparently had plenty of money, and talked vaguely of a purse the boys back home had raised for Shade's pa to come along.

When the Jack Rabbit walked nonchalantly out to the mound and a splitting yell went up that fairly lifted the hairs at the nape of one's neck, Selman, senior, seemed suddenly to shrivel. He crouched down and never opened his lips. Could this confident young gladiator be his boy, the shiftless Shade? Were those myriads of city folk shrieking so wildly for his son? Why, it was only yesterday he had paddled him with the back of a brush—the old man shrank lower, his breath straining.

But Uncle Ben was of different stuff. It all seemed right and natural and fitting to Uncle Ben. He began to blubber—wholly unconscious of it; he sat there blubbering like a child, his bony, vein-swelled hands working spasmodically.

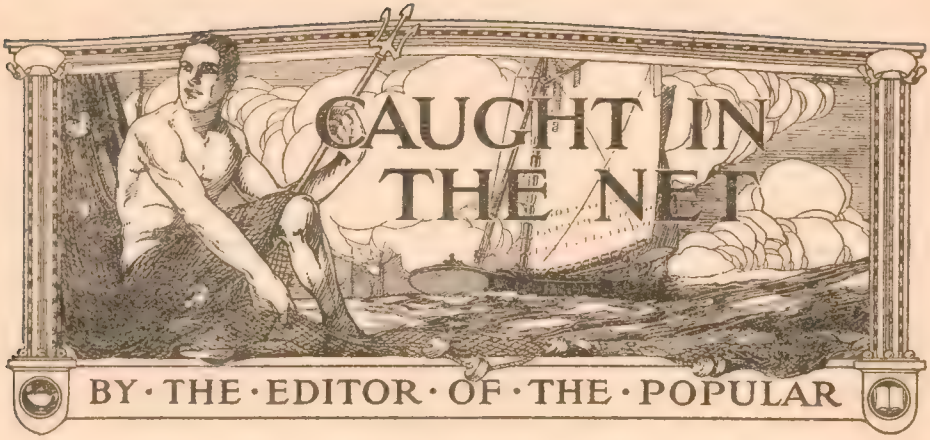
And when in the seventh, with the score tied and two on bases and Home-run Baker at bat, the crowd fell silent an instant, suddenly tense with a realization of the crisis, and Shade for the first time showed signs of flurry, and nervously sanded his hand—then did Uncle Ben rise in his place. His chin whisker aquiver, his Adam's apple jerking up and down, he leaned far forward over the rail, and sent a long, rebel yell across the field:

"Ri-ide him, buster! Ri-ide him, Shade, boy!"

The Jack Rabbit heard, and glanced toward the box. It was a fleeting look, but his manner lost its hurry, and he grinned at Uncle Ben. Then he wound up very leisurely—wound up, and struck out the mighty Baker.

"Glory be!" said his father prayerfully, sinking back and mopping his face. "There ain't another man living could have done it but my boy!"

Then, hoarsely above the bedlam around them to Uncle Ben: "What did I tell you, Uncle Ben? Didn't I always say so? Hey? That boy of mine has done just what I said he'd do. Yes, sir, I always knowed Shade would be a world beater!"



A GREAT JEW

A MAN who can sit quietly in a Second Avenue, New York, office—third floor—looking out over the forest of tenements and the jungle of traffic, and from that point can project a revolution and convert that revolution into a reconstruction, is an effective man, even if he is modest and simple—a short man, with spectacles and a sense of humor. Here he is, in the United Hebrews Building of New York City, one of those national statesmen-educators, who decree the changes and guide them down well-grooved channels.

Samson Benderly is one of the radical Jews, like Abraham Jacobi, the Flexners, Bergson, and Louis Brandeis, with the knack of searching analysis and the power of executive accomplishment in the trained mind, and the love of the common people in the heart. He moves as gently to his large purpose as a summer wind, and that purpose is the encompassing of every Jewish youth in the United States with religious instruction. He has watched the breakdown of the home, the wide severance between parent and child, the loss of ethical standard, the tides of modern life sweeping the young generations out into a world of chaos and tumult. He and Doctor Magnes have seen this universal absence of discipline, the four hundred years that separate the father, born in Russia, raised on rabbinical lore, and the son, reared in the American city and the public school. They diagnosed the ailment, and they have begun with the cure. They have created the bureau of education and have obtained the financial backing of such leaders of the race as Jacob Schiff. They are standardizing and modernizing the medieval schools of instruction in morals, scattered through the Jewish communities of our cities. They are introducing a high grade of teacher—one who starts in with a salary of seven hundred and twenty dollars a year, instead of the two hundred or three hundred dollars which used to be paid to the Melamed in a cellar or garret or saloon. They are supplying uniform textbooks and a perfectly articulated course. Already sixteen thousand children are in these standardized schools. Soon fifty thousand will be added. Then, with time, the other two hundred thousand in New York will be reached. Meanwhile, by correspondence and textbook, these educators are influencing Jewish instruction in forty other cities.

This work of Doctor Benderly's supplements that of the public schools. It is given Saturday, Sunday, and one afternoon. It includes the Jewish scriptures, Jewish history, Jewish songs. It emphasizes the teaching of the Hebrew prophets—that not-to-be-outgrown vision of peace and justice on earth, the Kingdom of God as a consummation inside our worldly economy. This man lays hold of our modern life right at the danger point—the unruly youngster, boy and girl, who has broken loose from parental and religious control, and who has thrown himself eagerly and unwisely into the various exciting life of the city, with moral ideals forgotten, and standards of conduct unobserved.

Not only is Benderly engineering the greatest Jewish educational movement since the dispersion, but he is achieving a program which Gentiles may wisely follow. Not one of these immigrant problems of shattered household, perplexed parent, and undisciplined child, tackling life with no steadying inherited belief, but is as well the problem of the American home in every town of every State. How shall we recover our ancient sense of moral values? What must we do to be saved—saved from sin and folly, from the surface life of cheap sensation and hardness of heart?

STYLE

STYLE consists of thoughts and adjectives. A writer's method of handling these ingredients fixes his style. If he writes to express thoughts, his style will be clear. Adverbs are second cousins, past participles stepaunts, and adjectives mere speaking acquaintances. He does not clutter up the place with these except on holiday occasions.

But if he merely thinks he thinks, or endeavors to make the reader think he thinks and feels and sees, adjectives are his brothers, adverbs his sisters, and past participles his boon companions. Then his style will be flowery. It will sound like tin thunder back of the curtain, and look like paper ornaments. Many writers and speakers jam their discourse so full of parts of speech, that if there ever was an idea, like a mouse in a waste-paper basket, it might raise a family and nobody ever discover it.

Language is a conveyor and not a creator. Without ideas, emotions, color in the mind of the writer, there can be no style. And no style can be essentially beautiful which does not convey with some degree of clearness and vividness the writer's mental state to the reader.

An amateur endeavors to cultivate style by lugging in every conceivable plant and flower and shrub of speech; but a master begins by clearing away the brush so the straight wind and clear light can get in—and out.

WISE

THERE is a whole group of loud-lunged self-advertisers to-day in each of the professions and trades. They believe they must make a noise in order to be heard. As fast as you give them publicity they quit being useful. Their efficiency ceases altogether when they become famous. They spend their time running around, keeping up their front. They throw their strength into advertising, hurrying about to dinners, conventions, public functions.

They chuck their job in order to show their face and tell about their success. They parcel out the brute work of their office to their hired helpers. With any one of them you feel his attention is only in part on the present discussion, that he is being drawn somewhere else, and is about to leave you. He is a chairman of a vice commission, dean of a church, director in half a dozen charities. He flits from one to another activity, giving to each a hurried, imperfect attention.

LIMITATIONS

HAPPY is the man who can see his limitations without feeling them. Nothing is more stifling than to feel limitations, to feel that no matter how hard he runs, how strongly he climbs, how adroitly he seeks, he is forever and ever shut in by impassable walls of his own limitations. It is almost maddening to a high-spirited man, and it is benumbing to the ambitions of any man.

And yet it is well—even necessary—for a man to see there are some things he had better not undertake, some places it is unwise for him to venture. If he does not see this with his judgment, he will be forever squandering his time and forces upon impractical things at which he will inevitably fail.

The boy manifests the best combination of the seeing and feeling when he says to the fellow who has outjumped him: "Oh, well, I could beat you if I jumped long enough, but I must go get my arithmetic lesson." He does not admit any lack in his jumping powers; he feels that he could beat him—or anybody else, if he only chose to put in enough time. But he recognizes, that all things considered, his energies had better be centered on the arithmetic just now.

If we can keep that feeling of boundless horizon, a sense that nothing is impossible to us if we only concentrated on it, and yet have the canny vision which enables us to see which it is most prudent for us to leave, and which to undertake, we can be both successful and happy.

THE NEW CONSCIENCE

WHEN the suffering we cause another is once clearly seen by us, we are not permitted to continue inflicting that suffering. It is not with impunity that we repeat acts which once left us unremorseful. And not ever again will men be able to take the old reckless pleasure in irresponsible companionships with the girl of the street. They have learned that she suffers for their pleasure, that she is not a partner and pal, but a victim. The memory of that will return to trouble even the most careless of moments.

WHERE THEY STILL USE BICYCLES

AN interesting item of news came from France the other day among a mass of trade statistics. It seems that in the year 1900, when the bicycle craze was on the wane in this country, there were only 800,000 bicycles in France. Last year there were 3,200,000. Automobiles are in demand in France, but they do not seem to have affected the bicycle industry. Doubtless the fact that bicycles are no longer taxed in France has had much to do with their present popularity.

The Twisted Skein

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Stroke Oar," "The Fugitive Freshman," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

Even in the careless democracy of the campus these two Yale men, Stanley Foster and Karl Truman, move along totally different social paths: one the spoiled darling of fortune, the other a shabby youth fighting the hard fight up from poverty. But though Karl is a hardworked drudge, he is one of the most brilliant scholars among the juniors. While Foster frits away his time on girls—especially Hazel Delaney—and automobiles, Karl has mastered many subjects, and is an expert chess player. The Misses Carbury, maiden ladies with whom he boards, take great interest in Karl, and when he is chosen to go to New York to play in a chess tournament, they send word in his behalf to their rich cousin, Jonathan Carbury, a chess lover. Jonathan Carbury becomes an admirer of Karl, and proposes to lend him enough money to continue his education without the handicap of "working his way through." After much persuasion Karl accepts, and returning to New Haven soon finds himself on the same social footing with Stanley Foster and Foster's chum, Jerry Altemus. Meanwhile the Yale crew have been at practice, and the captain, Carter Avery, hopes to retrieve the shame and defeat of several successive years. But his material is raw and ragged. Foster, his best man, cannot join the crew, because he has conditions to work off. Having always cherished an ambition to be one of the eight, Karl goes in for coaching from the very beginning. He has conquered mental difficulties in the past, now for athletic development. At this stage of events it is announced that a graduate coach, Pop Ingram, famous in his day as a winning oarsman, is relinquishing big business interests to come on to New Haven and coach the crew for an old-time victory. And with him will be his lovely daughter, Janet, already an admirer of Stanley Foster.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Two.)

CHAPTER VI.

DOWN at the Yale boathouse Karl Truman sweated and tugged away like a galley slave. Did he consider it work? Bless you, no! This was play, and every afternoon he declared a dividend on his investment in the enjoyments of youth. After the first day or so Captain Avery Carter was too busy otherwise to pay much attention to him. The season was so far advanced and the coaching duties so burdensome pending the arrival of Mr. Pop Ingram that a perfectly green candidate was more likely to be regarded as a future possibility than a present help. Karl had no fault to find. It was not for him to feel neglected. He was grateful and contented as long as the captain did not dismiss him from the squad.

He tubbed about in a pair-oar, untiring, absorbed, good-naturedly coached in the rudiments by this man or that who happened to be waiting for a chance to go out in an eight. And when there was nothing else to do he loafed on the floating stage and watched the other fellows row past, that quick, blue eye of his mastering one detail after another, the logical mind piecing together the theory of the thing.

Carter Avery was shifting the best dozen oarsmen about, trying to put together a tentative first crew in order that Mr. Ingram might have more stable material for his handiwork than an unassorted mob. Karl Truman began to comprehend why one was chosen and another discarded. Three veterans of the year before were given the right of way because they had earned it.

This story began in the first August number, which is still on the news stands.

They would keep their places unless crowded out by talent as yet undeveloped. The remaining seats belonged to men who had served their apprenticeships in class crews for one or two years. As a tyro, Karl reflected that he was no better than a thousand-to-one shot, but his ardor burned undimmed.

The youngster who sat at stroke had shoved his freshman eight along to victory in a rattling good two-mile race, but it was doubtful whether he could go the long varsity route of twice the distance and stand the punishment. He was wiry, nervous, with the courage of a gamecock, liable to train to too fine an edge unless carefully watched. It was absolutely necessary that there should be no lagging behind him, no break in the swing of the last four men to let his heave and drive take more than its share. With coöperation perfectly timed he might be fashioned into a dashing stroke oar. It was worth trying.

Carter Avery sat in his old place at number six. Between him and the stroke oar was the vastly important position of number seven, who made the pace and rhythm for the starboard side. It was temporarily filled by a varsity football guard, a Hercules for muscle, but he was slow-witted and slow-bodied. He disliked rowing, pressure of opinion had coerced him, and at the end of the preceding season he had sulkily sworn never to touch an oar again. Karl Truman could see very clearly that what this crew most needed was Stanley Foster, and the longer he watched and observed the more urgent appeared this need.

"I may not be a star performer with an oar," he said to himself, "and there is no wild rush to shove me into the varsity boat, but this looks like a chance to make myself useful. Maybe I can help the crew row faster, which is what I'm here for, as I size it up."

Stanley Foster had become a rather damaged hero in the eyes of this former admirer, but he was worth trying to mend. Although they now dwelt in the same dormitory there had been no exchange of the social amenities. Campus rumor spread it, and the tale was adorned with many picturesque variations, that the lowly Truman had come into a fortune and was embarking on the career of an all-round sport. His wardrobe was described as the envy of Jerry Altemus, than which no more could be said. The Chapel Street merchants were said to welcome him as the most sincere spender the college had known since "Plunger Pete" Riddle, of Pittsburgh, was expelled in the first term of freshman year. All of which was careless nonsense, forgotten as soon as said. It sufficed to prick Stanley Foster's curiosity, but he kept away from Karl's room at the other end of the hall. Karl had made him feel ashamed of himself. This was grievance enough.

Jerry Altemus was an amiable go-between, cultivating Karl's acquaintance because he honestly liked and respected him. Jerry boasted that he was no snob, thereby convicting himself of the contrary, but it was quite plausible to assume that his fastidious tastes found Karl more congenial now than in the shabby estate from which he had so sensationally emerged.

Having planned a course of action, Karl made sure that Stanley was in his rooms after supper, and wandered in to pay a return visit to Jerry. These two chatted for some time, ignoring the presence of the dour oarsman who had nodded a perfunctory greeting.

Deftly Karl led the random discussion around to the day's work in the classrooms and the recitations scheduled for the morrow. Because he was genuinely interested he made himself not only interesting but lucid. His intellect was so vigorous that it could im-

part its own enthusiasm. What had been a hopeless muddle to Stanley Foster began to seem within his ken. Jerry Altemus had no lack of quick understanding, but he was too lazy to try to make others understand. Anything that resembled stupidity bored him. Karl Truman made him exert himself. They stimulated each other.

Stanley listened and forgot to look at his watch. Karl kept track of the time, however, and was resolved that for once his wayward classmate should forego the evening pilgrimage to West Haven. Now and then Stanley broke into the talk with a question. His demeanor was perceptibly chastened. It indicated that he felt like a fool in such company as this.

"This stuff is hard because you think it is," said Karl, when he considered the moment opportune. "I'll bet I could make it look like a cinch to you between now and ten o'clock."

The unhappy oarsman mumbled his thanks. What he wanted to say was an apology, but pride is a stubborn thing. Karl had won a victory over him, and handsomely. That old, old doctrine of heaping coals of fire upon an enemy's pate was more effective than nursing a grudge.

"I'll sit in, if you don't mind," said Jerry Altemus. "This dormitory has some mental class to it since Truman joined the family. He is a kind-hearted gent to cast his pearls before such an obfusticated swine as you, Stanley. Now go to it."

With one statement after another large and clear and soundly reasoned, Karl demolished the mountain of obstacles which had blocked Stanley's half-hearted endeavors. He fairly bullied him into thinking for himself. He stirred his mind with tingling, magnetic impulses. Karl had not yet decided what vocation should be his life's work, but Jerry Altemus caught a glimpse of the truth and broke in to say:

"You can't dodge your destiny, Truman. I envy you. How many men are there in the Yale faculty? Several hundred. And you can count the born teachers on your fingers. It's the same at every other college. It is in a man like painting or writing or music. You can't make 'em to order. And the real teachers? Look at the stamp they put on the fellows under them. No, I'm not jollying you. How about it, Stanley?"

"It's great, Jerry!" cried his chum, his handsome face beaming with its normal good humor and confidence. "Truman is a wizard. I though my brain was petrified. Some sport to this!"

"And it will be just as easy for you to work off those two conditions," declared Karl. "You have let them hang over you like a nightmare. You expected to flunk them. If you had gone into the ring last year as the sophomore champion to wrestle that whale of a freshman and showed this sandless spirit, he would have stood you on your head in a jiffy."

"Right you are," agreed Stanley, with never a trace of resentment. "I have been a footless, cowardly dub. The sight of a book gave me cold feet. I know you are awfully busy, Truman, now that you're working with the crew squad——"

"We can study together evenings, if you like. That will take care of your daily recitations, and I'm sure we can edge in an hour now and then to do review stuff. Why, I could put you in shape to go up against those piffling little conditions next week if you were game to sit up late a few nights. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but those conditions of yours are a joke."

"I wish I had your sense of humor," earnestly replied Stanley. "Anybody that can find any merry jests in the courses I picked for junior year has Mark Twain skun a mile. How goes

the crew, anyhow? I haven't the nerve to show my face at the boathouse, and I am getting very spry at seeing Carter Avery first."

To be consulted about the varsity crew filled Karl's heart with fine rapture. Seriously he answered:

"The first eight looks pretty ragged. And I am learning to use my slide without kicking it out from under me."

"Then you are doing famously. I have been more heartily damned for that than for all the rest of my faults put together."

"The greatest trouble with the crew is at number seven," explained Karl.

"And that is one reason why you want to give me a lift with my studies?" quickly spoke the other.

"Partly that. Well, shall we put in another hour this evening?"

They drew their chairs closer to the shaded desk lamp, and Jerry Altemus stole out to keep a campus engagement. It was eleven o'clock when he returned. Stanley was alone, still poring over notebooks, nor did his gaze wander. Jerry was mute, reluctant to break the spell. He smoked his pipe and surveyed the studious young man with a kind of paternal approval. The wandering boy had come back to the fold, or, at least, this was the most hopeful symptom in some time.

"And nobody else could make the slightest dent in him," cogitated Jerry. "This tow-headed Truman lad has a way with him. I wonder if he is wise to Hazel? I opine that he is. Very little gets past *that* lightning calculator. Poor old Stanley! To see him sitting there you wouldn't think he was nutty. Ha, ha, he is a Hazel nut! That's a warm one. I'll have to hand it to him."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, will you shut up?" was the savage outburst from the desk. "That infernal trick of talking to yourself——"

"Upon my word, I didn't know I had peeped a sound, old man! I was gently chortling to myself over your apparent convalescence. I should like to feel your pulse, if you don't mind."

"Now don't play horse, Jerry. Go to bed, please. If you sit up you'll talk, and I don't want to be bothered. You just naturally spill words during your waking hours."

"But they must go in one ear and out of the other, my dear Stanley. There is nothing in between to stop them. Thank you, I shall retire to enjoy the dreamless slumber of an unsullied conscience and a worthy life. I wish I might wish you the same. Er—by the way, how will you explain it to Hazel—this evening when you had promised to be there? Don't lie. I saw it in your eye."

"Oh, confound you, I'll write her a note and mail it to-night. Karl Truman is decent enough to want to save me from being fired from college for low stand. I simply couldn't break away to-night."

"Still writing letters to her?" softly quoth Jerry, the cynic. "As a man of the world, I have warned you. You'll be sorry some day, very, very sorry. There are safer courses in English composition open to members of the junior class."

With this sage counsel young Mr. Altemus vanished into his bedroom to array himself in cerise pajamas and plow through six pages of Schopenhauer in order to keep his pessimism simmering at the proper temperature. There were times when Jerry was almost persuaded to enjoy life. He found it necessary to fortify himself against this temptation.

The mail next morning brought Stanley Foster a letter from Los Angeles which caused him to conclude that Karl Truman had come to his rescue not a day too soon. It was a spirited communication, and carried a certain weight because the signature was that of Stan-

ley's father. The most tolerant and generous of parents threatened to revolt. It was unprecedented, unreasonable. At the first reading Stanley was righteously indignant. He had been allowed to go his own gait, but here was an emphatic assertion of parental authority which conveyed that the long lane had come to a very sharp turning. He read the letter again. It didn't sound like his father at all. The paragraphs which commended themselves to his painstaking attention were worded as follows:

The dean has sent me two reports about you within the last month. He took the trouble to write them personally. The tone was most kindly, and evidently it was a duty undertaken with some reluctance. However, he made his meaning clear. You have been making a mess of it this year. I do not know what the trouble is, and the dean says he has not been able to put his finger on it. I infer, however, that I am partly to blame in giving you too much money to spend.

I went through college on a very liberal allowance from my own father, and managed to refrain from making an ass of myself. You seemed to be a level-headed youngster, and I expected you to keep up with your classes and be a credit to your people. An automobile is not essential to your health and happiness. It may be coaxing you away from the campus too much. Sell it at once. Your mother didn't want you to have it at college, and she was probably right. She usually is.

I expect to be in the East shortly, and shall want to talk things over with you. I mean business, my boy. Brace up! You have brains enough to win your diploma in a canter. If you make a failure at New Haven you go to work the day after the dean hands you your walking papers, and I mean W-O-R-K! That would be a novel, and, I fear, a painful experience. *Verbum sap!* Your mother sends love, and reluctantly indorses my brutal attitude.

Stanley blinked, and little chills ran up and down his spine. This was like turning on the cold shower in the boathouse dressing rooms.

"It surely is the wise lad that knows his own father," he said to himself, drawing a long breath. "In failing to get thoroughly acquainted with mine I overlooked an important bet. I seem to have another guess coming."

He felt in honor bound to show this letter to Miss Hazel Delaney as soon as possible. The affair had begun as a reckless flirtation, no doubt of that, and the swift currents of youth had borne him along. And then as the girl's beauty more and more bedazzled him he no longer saw that she was cheap and shallow and underbred. He even believed that she liked him for himself and not for his money. He had felt magnificently certain that he was a master of circumstances. But his father had jarred this conviction. It might not be so easy to obtain the paternal forgiveness as he had rashly assumed.

Late that afternoon he hovered near the department store until Hazel came out, after a rather trying day behind the glove counter. His senses thrilled at the sight of her. They walked for some time in the direction of West Haven, Stanley distrait, the girl wondering and apprehensive. Intuition told her that her young lord of the campus had come a cropper of some sort.

"I thought you were going to pick me up in the auto and whirl me home," said she. "Did you have a breakdown?"

"I—I sold it to-day," he stammered. "You see, I happened to meet a man in the garage who was looking for just such a car, and he made me a good offer."

"You did what?" Hazel halted to confront him. Incredulous astonishment was her dominant emotion. It was impossible for her to conceive of Stanley Foster apart and detached from a gorgeous six-cylinder car. It was like divesting a fairy prince of his coach and six or robbing Aladdin of the wonderful lamp.

"I had to sell it," bravely confessed Stanley.

"But it wasn't because you were broke. All you have to do is write home for more."

"That was a hallucination, Hazel. It has ceased to be a fact. If you will tarry beneath the next street light, I shall be pleased to let you read the official document. Then you will understand why I go afoot. Gasoline is a mocker. It stingeth like a serpent. I am stung."

"I do love to hear you rattle nonsense," said she, "but this sounds like trouble to me. Have you been running dreadfully in debt, you foolish boy?"

"Not a cent. A man with my allowance, the allowance that was, you understand, couldn't put himself in a hole unless he had a thirst or gambled. I'm not as depraved as that."

"You've lost your allowance?"

"Oh, not entirely. But I imagine that it has shrunk so that its best friends won't be able to recognize it hereafter. Too bad I didn't have it photographed when it was in its prime."

"Then this is a letter from your father? What's the use of my reading it now that you've told me the worst. Just why did he cancel the automobile?"

"Well, there isn't room to run a machine around and around the campus, and, anyhow, the scenery would become darned monotonous after a while. Therefore I presume that my father made a noise like a syllogism and concluded that I was using a car to conduct myself away from the campus as rapidly as the law allowed, and then some. Sometimes these parents are almost sagacious. You and I have rolled up mileage, Hazel. Can we deny it?"

"This looks as though you couldn't do as you please any longer, Stanley," thoughtfully murmured the enchantress. "Are you honestly up against it good and hard?"

"Hard? I have suddenly banged into a stone wall. The notion that I owned the earth was what Jerry Altemus would call one of the fantastical obsessions of mankind that move the gods to laughter. It is a great thing to live with a philosopher."

He was carrying it off well, but his spirits had begun to flag. He was conscious of disappointment. All he asked was that Hazel should feel sorry for him and show it. Where was the quick, responsive sympathy that had been part of her charm, the good comradeship in which he had so greatly delighted? He had kept his college worries to himself. This was the first time he had craved her sympathy.

"I'm not so awful strong on philosphy," she said, with an attempt at lightness. "No more joy rides! And the moon will be full next week."

"The open trolley cars will be running before long. I'm not proud, Hazel. And we can have some bully old walks."

Her animation drooped. Anxiously he gazed down at that bewitching face. Could it be that he read therein something cold and selfish and unlovely? Had he been wrong and Jerry Altemus right? Here was the first test, although he had not expected it to be such. Could it be possible that Hazel had a mercenary spirit? Then all women were false, by Heaven!

"Will you be out to see me this evening?" she asked. Her beguiling voice had never had this listless tone. Stanley noticed it, for the subtile poison was working. Sorely against his will, to switch the metaphor, he was detecting the rift in the lute. He muttered something, and Hazel added:

"I'm sorry, but I can't stand and talk any longer. It has been one of those days in the store. I had better take the next car that comes along. Come after supper, like a dear boy, and tell me the sad story."

"I shall have to study to-night. I made a date with a friend, Karl Tru-

man, the lad we ran into at the tavern, remember? He spilled his chess outfit all over the place."

"Oh, that tramp?" Hazel laughed, but there was no music in it. "Well, you *have* joined the down-and-out club, Stanley. I begin to believe your sad tale."

"You are wrong there," smiled Stanley. "Truman is the latest campus sensation. He is all there with the clothes and the easy coin. He and I have played a game of seesaw. He goes up and I come down. And maybe it's no more than fair, at that."

"He had a nice face," Hazel was now willing to admit. "And if he is a friend of yours, Stanley, I should be very pleased to meet him."

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Henry Ingram was able to finish his business in New York several days earlier than he had anticipated. It is barely possible that the Adorable Problem who went by the name of Janet helped to hasten his departure for New Haven by means of sundry persuasions and blandishments which, with true masculine stupidity, he failed to analyze. She made herself useful in the most unexpected ways, and was even pronounced a capable child by Aunt Kate who had come on to New York to lend a hand. Indeed, the trunks were packed with such expedition that when Janet's father wished to find his evening clothes he was compelled to rummage for them beneath two overflowing trays.

It was on a Saturday afternoon that they took possession of the house on Hillhouse Avenue. Without delaying to hang up his hat, Pop Ingram announced that he was bound for the Yale boathouse to take a look around before he mapped out his coaching campaign and began to shake things up. This was a half holiday, perfect weather, no wind, and every man who went in for rowing at all would surely be on the water.

"Please may I go too?" pleaded the daughter. "You will be too busy next week to bother with me, and your language will probably be too earnest for my ears. I promise to help Aunt Kate all day to-morrow."

"Take her along, Henry," advised his efficient sister. "The servants have arrived, by a miracle of good fortune. Dinner will be at seven."

Pop Ingram capitulated without a struggle. He could show Janet the dilapidated old boathouse, now abandoned, out of which his own gallant eights had carried their shells in a simpler, ruder age. They had never complained because a city sewer emptied within a few yards of the float, nor bewailed the lack of comfortable quarters. He had won his first race as a stripling of eighteen, no older, think of it, than this girl of his who considered herself a young lady.

They walked down Chapel Street, as he had done so many, many times, past the same old houses and churches. The spell of the past was strong upon him. He should be swinging along arm in arm with Josh Stokes and Bill van Slyck, and lingering a few minutes to chat with Hortense Howe, that sweet, perennial college widow who had somehow happened to be on the porch when the crew men passed. But these reflections were straying out of bounds, and Janet had to nudge him before he heard her say:

"Did you know any New Haven girls when you were in college, dad? Why, what makes you look so red and silly?"

"Girls? Pooh, no! We let 'em severely alone. Too busy. A man queered himself if he went fussing about in New Haven society. He was supposed to stick to the campus where he belonged."

"What a horrid point of view that was! So selfish! I am glad to know

that Yale has improved in some respects."

From the old boathouse, where this silvered patriarch of forty-seven became a prey to sentimental recollections, tinged with melancholy, they made a detour and halted on the wide drawbridge where river and harbor met. Several eights were at work, and Pop Ingram became the quick-eyed, critical coach.

"There is Carter Avery at six," he muttered, "so that must be what he calls his first crew. Lord save us, aren't they simply awful, Janet?"

"It is a beautiful sight, I think, all pulling so evenly together and exactly in time with each other, like a machine."

"Together!" he groaned, pulling his soft hat over his eyes with a despairing jerk. "My darling, misguided daughter, your education is full of flaws and blowholes. If that crew is together, my eyesight is failing utterly."

"But where is Mr. Stanley Foster, dad? That isn't he at number seven. He is ever so much better looking."

"I am glad that the young man yonder is no friend of yours. He moves with the ease and grace of a rheumatic rhinoceros. Well, shall we go down to the float and wait for them to come in?"

Karl Truman had been denied even the satisfaction of splashing about in a pair-oar on this fateful afternoon. Upon one end of the float had been rigged an outrigger and a sliding seat. It was intended for the use of beginners and was derided by real oarsman. One could slide back and forth and dip an oar in the river and out again and try to pull the float loose from its moorings, if he felt so inclined. Karl had not an atom of false pride. There were certain motions which could be learned by paddling diligently at this humble anchorage.

He looked up from trying to bury his blade at precisely the right depth, wiped the sweat from his eyes, and beheld the Adorable Problem. Alas, for that masterly concentration of mind which had toyed with the most abstruse problems of the college curriculum. Here was one of another kind, so girlishly fair and radiant, so suggestive of springtime and violets and the freshness of morning! Karl's heart bore no scars. Until this moment he would have told you that he was too busy to waste his time on girls. He was no disillusioned man of the world like Jerry Altemus, nor had he discovered, with Stanley Foster, that all women were false. At football games, in commencement week, during junior prom time, he had seen the campus fairly blossom with girls, and he had enjoyed the spectacle en masse. It was like looking at a gay flower garden.

But this was an unique experience. With lamentable indifference to the rudiments of oarsmanship he gazed at Miss Janet Ingram until her cool and casual glance swept over and past him, and he blushed for his flagrant presumption. The varsity barge had halted within hailing distance, and the bronzed, robust gentleman who had the ineffable distinction of escorting the Adorable Problem was shouting at Carter Avery. The crew bent to its oars, and the barge sheered alongside the float.

"Delighted, Mr. Ingram," exclaimed the captain, as one whose burdens had rolled away. "I'm expecting the launch any minute. The water is fit to go as far down the harbor as you like."

He kicked his feet free of the lacings and climbed to the platform to shake hands with the coach, while the other men in the barge sat slumped over their oar handles, their countenances reflecting more alarm than pleasure at the coming of Mr. Pop Ingram. He did not look like a lenient taskmaster.

"But isn't his daughter a dream?" whispered the coxswain to the stroke. "Do you suppose she will go out in the

launch every day? If he expects you dubs to keep your eyes in the boat he'll have to put blinders on you."

"He is too wise to bring her to the boathouse often. Sure she's a dream, all right, but this barge is about the worst place to dream in that you ever picked out. Just you remember that, you rattle-headed runt."

Captain Carter Avery was accorded the favor of an introduction to Miss Janet, but his sense of duty was so exacting, and he stood in so much awe of the coach that he plunged at once into an intricate and highly technical discussion. She listened with a charming air of interest, but much of this rowing jargon was quite beyond her. No wonder dad had cast an ungallant slur at her education. He should have been giving her lessons, with charts and diagrams. How could these poor boys find room for anything else in their heads?

Karl Truman happened to be the only other young man who was not afloat. In humble isolation he sat easing his blistered palms. With quick courtesy Carter Avery surmised that Miss Ingram might like to have some one to talk to while they waited for the launch. Calling Karl over, he presented him as a classmate who had recently gone in for rowing. Conscious that he had no standing whatever in the exalted caste of university athletics, Karl assumed that he was beneath the notice of this princess royal of the house of Ingram. As a courtier, however, whose admiration was mirrored in his honest blue eyes, Janet decided that he might agreeably while away these idle moments. Graciously she was moved to ask:

"Did you take no interest in rowing until this season, Mr. Truman?"

"I was crazy about it from the first week of freshman year, Miss Ingram, but I couldn't seem to find the time."

"Oh, do you mean it was so hard to keep up with your studies?" Janet spoke with what might have been skepticism or disapproval, or both. She knew that her father would accept no such excuse as this from a young man so strong and ruddy as this one.

"Not exactly that. There were other things, you know," said Karl, conjecturing that Miss Ingram had never met the sort of fellow who worked his way through college. This seemed hardly the time to explain his personal affairs in detail.

"You were playing baseball or they made you go out for the track athletic team, Mr. Truman?"

"This is positively my first appearance. And I am the only person that takes me seriously."

Janet reflected. It was a man's first duty to work for his college. Look at dad, for instance, and such splendid examples as—well, as Mr. Stanley Foster of grand and gloomy memories. This Mr. Truman did not look it, but perhaps he was a sport, one of those dissipated triflers who gave colleges a bad name.

"I hope you keep very strict training," she ventured, wishing to exert a beneficial influence as befitted the daughter of the coach.

"It is not so very necessary. Until Captain Avery gives me something more to do than dubbing around—well, you see, I expect that every day will be my last. Perhaps I don't go to bed as early as I ought."

"Possibly you need a stricter system of discipline," loftily observed Janet, with a significant glance at her father. Karl had hoped to make a more favorable impression than this. With every word he seemed to flounder deeper. He was about to try a pleasantry or two which might make the talk less uncomforably personal when Mr. Ingram sang out that the launch was coming downriver. And then the miserable Truman, left to stand alone, saw Janet touch her father's arm and heard her confidentially inquire:

"*Did* you ask the captain why Mr. Stanley Foster isn't rowing in the crew?"

Back to his seat and his oar at the edge of the platform trudged Karl Truman, for the first time bitten by the serpent tooth of jealousy. The pain was sharper than the sting of his blistered palms. He could have told her why Stanley Foster was absent from the crew, and he would have dearly loved to swing his fist against the handsome lineaments belonging to the said Stanley Foster. But the doctrine of fair play forbade reprisals. He sighed and manfully resumed his task of sticking his oar in the water and lifting it out again, after the manner of an aquatic treadmill.

He did not hear Pop Ingram say, as the launch slipped away from the platform:

"Who is that chap? I didn't catch his name. You were talking with him, Janet."

"A Mr. Truman. I thought I was going to like him, but he disappointed me."

"Shy of compliments, was he? He looks as if he had the stuff of an oarsman. What about him, Avery?"

"He is green, but he takes hold with a lot of grit and intelligence."

"I shall have to look him over in a pair-oar."

"Tell me, Mr. Avery, is he what you would call a sport?" put in Miss Janet, who disliked to see her judgments flouted.

"The warmest ever," was the careless, laughing answer. "He is the prize little high roller of the junior class. The way that fair-haired boy burns money is a scandal."

The captain would not have harmed Karl's reputation for worlds. He merely echoed the playful badinage of the campus. Janet nodded gravely. Trust her to read human nature. This Mr. Truman was not the sort of person one could afford to know. His appearance was astonishingly deceptive, and she had been very clever to perceive, from his few remarks, that he had wasted his college career and neglected his duty toward athletics.

Poor, innocent profligate whose wildest outbreak as a spendthrift had been the purchase of a new flute and a set of ivory chessmen long coveted, Karl's longing eyes saw the launch vanish beyond the bridge and pursue the first eight into the placid reaches of the harbor. Nobody showed any inclination to coach him. *She* has passed beyond his ken, her thoughts turning to Stanley Foster, and his world was no longer filled with springtime and violets.

"I seemed to get in wrong with her," he murmured to himself as he walked into the boathouse. "I can't seem to understand why. I never realized that a fellow could feel so happy and then so loaded up with woe in the same hour. Old Jonathan M. Carbury spoke truly. You can't buy happiness with money."

A sinister fate had begun to dog his footsteps. On Monday morning, with a spare hour after chapel, he hastened down street, having several small errands to do. One of them was to buy a pair of gloves. An attractive display in a window of a department store caught his eye in passing. It was a special sale, and thrift was one of his habits. Miss Hazel Dalaney was farthest from his thoughts until he found himself confronting her across a counter. His pulse was perfectly tranquil. Hers was not the style of beauty which he preferred. It was that of the rose, not the bud, and it flaunted itself too aggressively. She had, indeed, played the deuce with Stanley Foster, and this made her an object of critical interest. Hazel, on the contrary, felt a flutter of excitement which had nothing to do with selling this smartly tailored young man a pair of gloves. He moved in a glamour of remantic opulence. What Stanley had

told her about him was enough to make him worth notice. Presumably the beggar student had come into a fortune. So sharp was the contrast between his past and present estate that exaggeration was inevitable.

Expecting no recognition from her, Karl politely expressed his desire to look at some medium-weight tan walking gloves. He was taken aback to hear her say, with flattering cordiality:

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Truman. What size, please?"

He extended a strong hand, whose palm was ridged and red from the hard usage of the oar.

"Eight is my number, but you had better make it a half size larger. My hands feel as big as a pair of hams."

"Goodness, this one is all puffed up, Mr. Truman. It must hurt something fierce," exclaimed the sympathetic Hazel, very carefully drawing the measuring tape around his knuckles. "You are rowing on the crew? It must take sand, believe me, with your hands in that shape."

"Oh, a fellow can't lay off for a little thing like that," airily replied Karl, as modest a youth as ever lived, but unable to withstand this appeal to the vanity of his sex.

"I know a friend of yours," she adroitly remarked, "Mr. Stanley Foster. He is a crew man, too. Is he studying hard these days?"

"He is doing very well. He will be out of the woods before long. He took a tumble to himself."

At this moment the blindfolded goddess of chance threw the dice, and Karl was given no warning. Aunt Kate and the Adorable Problem were making a leisurely shopping tour of Chapel Street, and they came, at length, to the department store in which Miss Hazel Delaney queened it behind a glove counter. Janet wanted handkerchiefs, and these were to be found across the aisle from where Karl Truman was selecting the proper shade of tan. She recognized him and looked again. It was the pleasant-featured but dubious young man of the boathouse whom Mr. Carter Avery had called the "prize little high roller of the campus."

Strange that Karl should not have felt the nearness of his divinity. This pyschic-wave theory sometimes fails to connect. He put the gloves in his pocket and waited for change of a five-dollar note while Hazel chattered smilingly:

"He told me he had sold his car. You were the man that bought it, I shouldn't wonder."

"No, I didn't buy it."

"No secondhand car for yours? The latest model? I guess so. Do you know, I haven't seen you since that little supper down at the old taven at Harkness Cove, speaking of automobiles. Quaint old joint, isn't it—that big fireplace on a winter's night—and the cook certainly does know how to fry chicken."

Miss Janet Ingram had abruptly lost interest in imported handkerchiefs. The voice of Hazel had a carrying quality. Not a word missed fire. Darkest suspicions were confirmed. This bold Mr. Truman had confessed that he kept late hours. Now Janet knew what he did with them. Taking shopgirls on motor rides to suppers at "quaint old joints" out in the country. It was nothing against a girl that she should have to work behind a glove counter, oh, no indeed, but for a wealthy college student to do this sort of thing and be so brazen about it—Janet's scornful, contemptuous glance should have pierced the shocking young man and caused him to writhe with shame. All oblivious, he put his change in a pigskin purse, courteously thanked Hazel, and sauntered toward the street.

"What is the matter with you, Janet?" demanded Aunt Kate. "I have spoken to you twice. What are you looking at?"

"A perfect stranger. Do you know, I think that some of the young men who go to Yale need looking after."

CHAPTER VIII.

So rapid was Stanley Foster's progress toward redeeming himself in the eyes of the faculty that the dean, in the goodness of his heart, was moved to write the parent in Los Angeles and describe the case as hopeful. The boy had turned over a new leaf, so the tidings ran, and was doing faithful work in his classes. There seemed no doubt that he would be able to pass off his conditions and obtain respectable marks. As was reasonable enough, the father of Stanley took all the credit unto himself. He had acted with wisdom and firmness. What the youngster needed was a hard jolt. Too much money had come dangerously near spoiling him.

Stanley knew that it was Karl Truman who had taken him in tow and pulled him away from the reefs. Karl's whole attitude had been so manly and square that it could not fail to awaken responsive emotions. He had made dulled ambition regain its edge, compelled the drifting, irresolute scapegrace to fill his mind with something else than sentimental vaporings. Karl's stronger personality had been like a dynamic force. Much more like his normal self was Stanley when Mr. Pop Ingram, happening to meet him in Elm Street, paused to say:

"I have been hoping to shake hands with you at the boathouse, Foster. You are one of the men I am counting on to help pull things together. Carter Avery tells me good news of you."

"Thank you, Mr. Ingram. Yes, I go up against those condition examinations to-morrow, and unless I'm a victim of overconfidence I shall be there with the winning dope."

"Overconfidence is not a Yale failing these days," observed the coach. "Good luck to you. Then you will report for practice by the middle of the week?"

"Yes, sir, but I'd better knock on wood. Carter Avery has asked me to join the squad at the training table. That sounds like getting back home."

"It gives me a wistful feeling, Foster. By the way, you have not been with the crew at all since we began to change the stroke you rowed last year. It might be helpful if I talked it over with you a bit before you get into the boat. Will you be plugging away for those examinations to-night?"

"Not very late, Mr. Ingram. I want to feel fit in the morning, no cobwebs in my garret."

"Then why not walk out to my house for an hour or so? My daughter and Mrs. Bancroft, my sister, are going to the theater, but I have some business letters to write. I shall be all clear before ten o'clock."

"That will suit me and I'm a thousand times obliged," said Stanley. "I have been awfully anxious to get a line on your ideas. I rather stood up for the professional coaching system, but I am open to argument."

"I shall be pleased to give you all you want of it," replied Henry Ingram, his smile a trifle grim. He was not used to having his opinions questioned by youths barely old enough to vote. It smacked of freshness. In the old days an undergraduate would have sooner disputed a decision of the supreme court than the dictum and authority of a coach. Stanley went blithely on his way, and Henry Ingram, the quizzical crinkles at the corners of his mouth, said to himself:

"Open to argument, is he? I wonder how many fine young college graduates I have hired and fired in the last twenty years? It is a characteristic of the species. They are open to argument with the boss, and cocksure they can convince him."

Karl Truman, still trying to quench

the flame of jealousy, and dutiful to the last, went into Stanley's rooms after supper to give him the final grooming for the tussle with the faculty. There was the artist's pride in his handiwork, the teacher's interest in the pupil, but these laudable emotions were subdued, pitched in the minor key by the haunting influence of Janet Ingram. Karl had striven mightily to put Stanley back on the varsity crew, but now it meant giving him the opportunity of winning Miss Janet's favor, of seeing her at the boathouse, in the launch, even in her home.

Jerry Altemus, that contemplative onlooker, had no glimpse of this heroic phase of Karl's friendship. Stanley's examinations he regarded as a sporting event, and he had worked out an elaborate system of betting odds which found takers on every floor of the dormitory.

"What I need is an expert sheet writer," he informed Karl. "If I'm not careful I am liable to Dutch my book. I wish you'd look it over for me, you being a mathematical wizard. I have just posted the closing prices. Stanley canters to the barrier at even money that he gets a passing mark of 2.25."

"I should call that at least one to two," objected Karl, who had trained this entry and therefore knew what he could do.

"The paddock does not share your confidence," replied Jerry. "Stanley's past performances have been carefully studied. He hasn't finished in the money since sophomore year. Using the highest possible mark of four as a basis, I am offering three to one that he won't make an average of 2.65 on the two examinations, five to one that he can't nose in at 2.80 and fifteen to one that he can't score above 3.00. For a Phi Beta Kappa mark of 3.30, I am letting the bettor name his own odds. One rash gambler, he must be a true friend of yours, Stanley, has a dollar on you at forty to one."

"I hope you go broke," growled Stanley. "What if I flunk? Was any of these thugs mean enough to bet against a passing mark?"

"Several. In fact there was quite a rush to get aboard. It didn't seem decent of them. What I want to say to you is this: If they attach the can to you to-morrow, the bankruptcy of Jeremiah Altemus, junior, will shake the campus to its center."

"Karl, don't listen to that evil old man," peevishly advised Stanley. "He is trying to get my goat. Let's run over that last dozen pages of notes and then quit for the night. I have a date to call at Mr. Pop Ingram's palatial mansion."

"You have *what?*" ejaculated Karl, dropping the notebook. This was too much. There was such a thing as stretching college loyalty to the breaking point. With that boyish candor of his, he blurted:

"Are you going to call on Miss Ingram? Are you lucky enough to know her?"

"Oh, I met her last year. Classy little girl. Some pippin," was the easy assurance. "Awfully young, though. I'm no cradle robber."

"Amusing ass, isn't he?" drawled Jerry.

"I should think the girls would find him all of that," snapped Karl, his cheek redder than usual.

"Whew, I didn't expect to get a rise out of you," said Stanley, "A vicious thrust, Karl! I beg your pardon. Please forget it. Lovely weather we're having for March."

Karl glowered and briefly remarked that they had better attend to the business in hand, as he had some work of his own to do. Jerry's low whistle was eloquent. As one who calmly surveyed the tangled game of life from Olympian heights, he felt hopeful that these two foolish boys might furnish a very pretty little comedy. To watch Karl Truman,

the indomitable, try to solve the feminine equation ought to be bully good fun. Unless all signs were wrong, Stanley's infatuation in another quarter had been nipped by the chill wind of adversity. His susceptible heart was due to be caught on the rebound, reasoned Jerry.

This prognostication was singularly sound. When Stanley walked out Hillhouse Avenue a little later in the evening, he had no other purpose in mind than to discuss the theory and practice of rowing. His memories of Henry Ingram's daughter were pleasant but transitory, a pretty little schoolgirl who had been sorry for him after the boat race. Of course, now that he was an upper classman, she would seem more immature and absurdly young than ever. To a man of his age the older girls were so much more interesting. They know how to talk.

Henry Ingram's greeting was cordial yet dignified. In his evening clothes, master of this large and perfectly appointed house, he conveyed an impression which Stanley Foster had hitherto failed to grasp. That is to say, the graduate coach who gave his services because of love for the sport and loyalty to the college was a novel figure to him. His experience as an oarsman had been limited to the professional who taught rowing as a business and had very little time for sentiment or tradition. He shared the idea with some others of his own generation of undergraduates that a man who could come back to New Haven and give his services to pulling athletics out of the rut had found little else of importance to do in the world.

Beginning to comprehend that this solid, dignified gentleman was a person of wealth and distinction, Stanley's cocksure manner was sufficiently subdued to make him an agreeable companion. Henry Ingram found nothing bumptious in his opinions, and reflected that he might have been wrong in his first impression of the youngster. With pencil and paper the coach illustrated the Yale stroke which he believed to be soundly worked out, making the diagrams with the skill of the trained draftsman.

"The trouble with the professional who has been coaching you for the last few years was that he couldn't get away from the theory of single sculling," explained Pop Ingram. "He was not adaptable, like Courtney or Wray. Those men have carried Cornell and Harvard to the front because they could bring very unusual intelligence to bear on the problem, and were able to weld together the best features of various schools of rowing and discard their own ideas if they failed to stand the test."

"But if Yale has to change her stroke to win, isn't England the place to study the game? We fellows have been told that English crews can row faster than ours, Mr. Ingram, and they have been at it a good deal longer."

"Their style would kill an American college eight in four miles, every time, Foster. Their men are seasoned to it, and their stomach muscles can endure the tremendously long body swing. And I believe that much of their power is wasted. As for beating one of our best eights, it has never been tried on an American course. Those chaps have all the advantage when we send a crew to Henley or to the Oxford-Cambridge course. And they know how to race. They are at it all the time. The old Yale stroke was brought from England and modified to suit our material and conditions. If anything better had been discovered since at Yale or Harvard, the records over the New London course should be faster than they used to be. But they are not."

"We fellows don't realize that," said Stanley. "You see, I have never been lucky enough to know a Yale crew that could get out of its own way. We have miserably floundered in behind the red-

legs, shot all to pieces after the first two miles."

"Mind you, I am not very confident of winning this year," heavily exclaimed Ingram. "But I hope to convince Harvard that she has rowed a race when we finish. You can't build up a system and revive the old spirit in one season. You chaps have the underpinning to put in."

Stanley's face fell. This sort of talk sounded a bit like making excuses in advance, hedging against failure. It was an echo of the same old story—better luck next year. Henry Ingram easily read his thoughts and wondered if he had the moral stamina, the indifference to personal glory, of the old Yale breed.

"Well, we can only do our work day by day, Foster," he pleasantly observed. "You ought to make a slashing number seven if you are willing to take your gruel with the rest of the men. I am no glutton for work, no nonsensical chasing down to the boathouse before breakfast and all that. A couple of hours in the afternoon and make every minute count. Then forget rowing until next day."

They fell to talking strokes again. Henry Ingram had been the guest of the Oxford crew during a recent business trip to England, and what impressed Stanley even more was that a duke and a brace of lords were among his friends, a fact most casually mentioned. He joined their shooting parties if he happened to be over there at the right season. Stanley was unaware that he had lingered so late until he heard the front door opened, and the ladies of the household appeared from the theater. He stood staring, bereft of that ease of deportment on which he prided himself.

Miss Janet Ingram was not at all the insipid little schoolgirl whom he had expected to see. Mysteriously, in half a year, she had stepped across the border land, out of what his patronizing appraisement had termed mere childhood. It was partly her clothes and the way she did her hair, he said to himself, and yet there was much more. She was so serenely sure of herself, not in the slightest degree fluttered at sight of the great Stanley Foster, the varsity oarsman. Was this the girl who had turned pink with pleasure when he had favored her with a smile at that wretched dinner on board the Spencers' yacht after the boat race?

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Foster?" said she, sweeping into the room and graciously offering her hand. "So nice of you to drop in to see that father of mine and cheer his loneliness. I hated to run away and neglect him. Aunt Kate, Mrs. Bancroft, this is Mr. Stanley Foster. I forget his class, but he must be at least a sophomore."

"A junior, if you please," he stiffly corrected her, an awful frown upon his manly brow. Was she actually daring to jest with his dignity?

The doting father smiled a covert smile. It would seem as if the Adorable Problem were quite able to take care of herself.

"What an unpardonable blunder for me to make," laughed she, with a bow of mock penitence. "But really you Yale men ought to wear class tags of some sort. You all dress alike and walk alike and——"

"And I'm sure that as many of us as are fortunate enough to meet you will all think alike, Miss Ingram," gallantly exclaimed Stanley, rallying from his discomfiture.

"All I ask are eight men who will row alike," said Mr. Ingram.

"Mr. Foster looks as though he might be one of them," prettily volunteered Aunt Kate, who had seen much of society, and approved of this handsome collegian as belonging to her own caste.

"I shall have to prove it, Mrs. Bancroft," amiably replied Stanley. He

squared his fine shoulders a trifle. Who could doubt that his place in the Yale boat was decreed as assured and final?

"A man who works for Henry Ingram has to deliver the goods to hold his job," wickedly murmured Janet. "I am quoting his own words. But that will never worry you, I'm sure, Mr. Foster."

Stanley colored. This witch of a girl was trying to tease him. The hour was so late that he ought to be making his adieus.

"I hope you will come down to see us row," said he.

"I was out in the launch the other day," replied Janet, "but I don't remember seeing you in the boat."

"I—er—I couldn't begin training as early this year as usual. My college work has been heavy——"

"How stupid of the faculty to interfere with anything so important as the crew. By the way, Captain Carter Avery introduced a Mr. Truman at the boathouse. Do you know him at all?"

So Karl had met her! And he had said nothing about it, the clam! This explained his flare-up. Stanley had no intention of being unfair to a friend to whom he was under great obligations, and yet he was reluctant to admit that Truman had interposed to avert his explusion from college. A man hated to show himself up as a blockhead, or worse.

"Oh, yes, I have seen a lot of him lately. He has moved into my dormitory."

Janet could put two and two together. Never did feminine logic arrive at a swifter, surer conclusion. She no longer felt like teasing Mr. Foster. She was sorry for him. Perhaps he was a trifle vain. Most good-looking men were. He was probably generous, impulsive, easily influenced. He had been chumming with this Mr. Truman, and he had neglected his college duties and the varsity crew. Cause and effect: She knew Mr. Truman for what he was, and not alone by hearsay as "the warmest sport" in his class. Had she not seen him with her own eyes, heard what that creature behind the glove counter was saying to him?

"And do you find him congenial?" solemnly interrogated Janet, wondering if she ought to utter a warning.

"Truman? Well, I find it pretty hard to keep up with him," innocently answered Stanley, thinking of Karl's intellectual attainments. "He travels on high gear all the time. Nobody in the junior class can touch him."

"I should hope not," Janet devoutly exclaimed.

Stanley was vaguely puzzled. He was not very keen after scholarship honors himself, but people were not usually so outspoken about it. There was more or less prejudice against a valedictorian as being good for nothing else. Perhaps Miss Ingram had caught this opinion from her father, who looked extremely hard-headed.

"There is no danger of my catching up with Truman," said he. "We have surely had some busy night sessions together. I'm glad it's over."

"So am I, Mr. Foster. Must you really be going?"

Stanley bowed himself out. Aunt Kate remarked, with a yawn which could no longer be dissembled, that young people kept no more track of time than kittens. Janet was losing her beauty sleep and must come to bed at once. But Janet, bright-eyed and voluble, insisted upon detaining her father for a confidential chat. Aunt Kate left them facing each other across the library desk, the Adorable Problem propping her chin in her hands and frowning portentously. It was her manifest duty to reveal the true character of Karl Truman to Mr. Henry Ingram, coach of the Yale crew. The young profligate was one of the varsity squad, and he was

bound to be an influence demoralizing to discipline, and even to morality.

"I despise a tittle-tattle," she began with what was meant to be a demeanor both sad and stern. "And I never could stand the sort of girl who gossiped about men."

"As a rule the dear things prefer to gossip about each other," said he. "I gathered that this Truman young man had incurred your displeasure."

"Displeasure! My merciless condemnation. I hope you will keep your eye on him."

"As an oarsman? I intend to. I told Carter Avery so. What is this tempest in a teapot?"

Thus provoked, Janet unfolded her lurid narrative. It shocked her delicacy, but indignation carried her along with a rush. Her parent sat like a judge and made no comment until she concluded, with flashing eyes:

"And now you can understand why Stanley Foster has not been rowing with your crew. He was led astray. But I feel that he has seen the error of his ways. He said as much, that Mr. Truman was too fast for him. 'Travels on high gear.' I should say he did."

"Um-m, I'm a bit surprised that Carter Avery presented him to you, my angel child."

"It was merely a courteous impulse. He thought I looked bored. And he took pains to tell me in the launch that Mr. Truman was awfully sporty. It was to warn me, I suppose. I'm quite sure I have had warning enough."

"Well, Avery hasn't taken him very seriously as an oarsman, and I presume he is too green to bother with this year. As soon as the squad is weeded again he isn't apt to be found among the survivors. And you and I can both cut him off our list."

"He is already abolished from mine, with the blackest kind of a mark!"

"How was the theater, Janet? Good show?"

"Splendid, dad, ever so many lovely thrills in it. An English play, 'The Twisted Skein.' Such a duck of a leading man. He played the part of a younger son who was under a cloud. In reality he was perfectly fine and manly, but circumstances conspired to make him out just the contrary. What he did and what he said were fated to be misunderstood. The most harmless things were turned into scandal, and the scandal grew. Even his friends helped ruin his good name without intending to. It made life seem so queer and tangled and accidental. But of course I realized that the plot was improbable. It couldn't happen off the stage."

"You mean that a man pretty generally gets what is coming to him?" drowsily commented her father, who was slightly inattentive. "That has been my experience."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," said Janet, as she kissed him good night. "Aunt Kate and I agreed that we had too much common sense to be fooled by any such twisted skein of circumstances."

Stanley Foster had sauntered toward the campus at a meditative gait for one so belated. In his heart was a fiery, tormenting ambition to redeem the past. He had been foolish, but he thanked God that he had not been wicked. He had committed no unforgettable wrong. Vividly there came to him what Jerry Altemus had said, that if a fellow found the right girl it ought to buck him up, make him anxious to build the finest possible record for her sake, put the very last ounce of "pep" into his career. It was all true. Love at first sight, pure and divine, was no poet's dream. Stanley knew better. As for that brief infatuation for Hazel Delaney, it had turned to ashes. It was cold and dead and hateful. And she had not really cared. It was his money and his automobile and a wealthy father's favor.

There was a light in Jerry's room. He was reading in bed, and at Stanley's entrance he stalked into the study, an annoyingly inquisitive specter.

"You keep nice hours for a stake horse with my entire fortune hung up on you," he grumbled. "Considerate of you! You must have talked the Honorable Pop Ingram's ear off, or vice versa. I suppose the child had been put to bed."

"Cut out that stuff when you mention Miss Ingram," flung back Stanley.

"It is your own line of banter, not mine," quoth the other. "So you met her! Dear, dear! I had one of my infallible hunches. You have the foolish look—rapt is the literary word, but rapped over the head describes it more accurately."

"Now see here, Jerry, you and I have never quarreled, but if you don't shut up I shall start something. It's rotten bad form to guy a man about a girl—that kind of a girl."

"I begin to believe she really set you going. All I ask is that you stay somewhere near the earth until after those examinations to-morrow."

"Jerry, I'll eat them up, so help me!"

"There! That sounds as if you were honestly getting up steam. It's all right, my son. I approve. By the way, there is a note for you on the desk. I was tempted to hide it overnight, but it came by special delivery, and I thought it might be urgent. I hope there is nothing to upset you."

Stanley glanced at the superscription, shied, looked again, and reluctantly ripped open the envelope. Singular that his emotions should have veered so far from one extreme to the other. What Hazel had to say to him he read to himself.

DEAR STANLEY: I think you had better come out to the house some evening soon. I have been expecting you, but you are getting awful careless about your engagements. You ought to do something for that loss of memory. If you can't make it convenient, my father can stop at the campus as easy as not on his way home from work and give you the message. I feel perfectly friendly. It's just that things can be talked over easier than written about. Yours for happy days,

HAZEL MARGUERITE DELANEY.

Without a word, Stanley tossed the letter to the curious Jerry Altemus, who perused it with a slow, sardonic grin. The room was heavy with silence. It was broken by Stanley's sigh that was like a groan. Redeeming the past was not so easy if it had to fly up and hit a man square between the eyes. His distress was so appealing that Jerry dropped all persiflage, although he was sorely tempted to ring the changes on "I told you so."

"Cleverly worded," said he. "That reference to her horny-handed sire is particularly neat. She has put one over on you."

"But she was ready to drop me as soon as she learned that I had sold my car and was reduced to genteel poverty," blurted Stanley. "She didn't try to hide it. All bets were off."

"Ah, but you failed to convince her that the same misfortune had overtaken the Foster family cash box. You were a possible asset as your father's son. And he has figured in the newspapers as scandalously rich. All of which was prophesied by Jeremiah Altemus, junior, the evil old man who sits and looks on."

"But I never actually asked her to marry me, even when I was at my dippiest. I may have thought of it——"

"A New Haven jury would stretch the evidence until it cracked in order to sting a Yale undergraduate in breach-of-promise proceedings, my misguided young friend. Your letters to her were mushy, I know it. Lord, but you had a delirious jag of make-believe romance."

"I am painfully sober now, Jerry."

"There is always a morning after, Stanley."

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Henry Ingram walked up and down the boathouse float and showed marked interest in a pair-oared tub which was moving at a brisk pace along the farther side of the river. Karl Truman was pulling at stroke and a varsity substitute steered. The latter young gentleman was playing the rôle of coach, his manner a sedulous copy of Pop Ingram's most dogmatic mood, his voice rolling across the water in stentorian volume. He was having his little turn at being a tyrant, and Karl Truman was a docile victim. The keen Ingram eye twinkled with amusement. This imitation of himself was excellent. But his attention was fixed upon the oarsmanship of Truman, who might be a sad rogue, but who was also an apt and earnest pupil.

"He handles himself as though he had worked out the principle of the thing," thought the coach. "Stiff and muscle-bound but limbering up every day. And he gets into it with a quick, hard catch. His watermanship is a lot better than his morals."

He called to Carter Avery, who was coming down the runway from the boathouse:

"Have you tried Truman in an eight?"

"No, sir, not yet. Do you think I ought to keep him with the squad any longer?"

"By all means. I had not seen him out in a pair-oar until just now. Take a man out of your second or third crew for this afternoon and put Truman in, say at five. Give him a chance."

"Very well, Mr. Ingram. He can stand all the hard work you want to soak at him."

"Queer! He looks in the pink of condition," muttered the coach as Avery turned away. "These red-hot college sports are usually soft and wind-broken. He is a new kind of phenomenon."

Karl felt amazed when the mandate of the varsity captain transferred him to an exalted station in the waist of an eight-oared barge. Jonathan M. Carbury should have been there to see that shining face, the immeasurable realization of hopes that had seemed too rash to entertain. It was only the third crew, true enough, what the superior first eight was wont to term "that basket of misfit dubs." But it was recognition, promotion, and a foothold on the ladder.

At first Karl made a sorry hash of it. The barge moved so much faster than the lumbering pair-oar that it seemed to be running away with him. His blade splashed in behind the others and kicked up showers of spray. It stuck when he tried to pull it out at the finish, the handle thumped him in the stomach and whanged the breath out of him. On the reach forward he poked number six in the small of the back and was roundly cursed. The coxswain was insulting. His shrill menaces fairly pelted the unfortunate Karl, who appeared to have forgotten all the rowing he ever knew. The barge rocked and made him swing from side to side. He was yet to learn the unconscious poise which makes the mastery of the narrow racing shell akin to the art of the tight-rope performer.

It impressed him as a mournful anticlimax. He was making himself ridiculous, and hampering the other men. It was kindly of Mr. Ingram to give him this chance, but it meant the finish of his brief career with the glorious fraternity of the boathouse. The barge labored past the first eight which was waiting for the launch to come up astern. Presently Mr. Ingram shouted something, and Captain Carter Avery, sitting easily alert at number six, ordered his coxswain to give the word.

The august varsity boat shot ahead and picked up the long, surging stride. Karl's eager vision followed Stanley Foster in his old place behind the stroke

oar, quick and lithe and graceful, swinging into it with no labored effort.

"Well, I put him there," said Karl to himself, "if there is any comfort in that. But as for me, I should opine that chess is the best game I play."

His sluggard crew followed the launch, steering wide to avoid the wash. And even while Karl was holding wretched communion with himself something occurred that seemed like magic. When he threw his shoulders against the oar he encountered the resistance of the water banking in front of the blade. The boat was no longer running away from him. He was beginning to find himself, to quicken his motions in accord with the tempo of the crew. Instead of floundering to and fro on his slide he was applying his strength to help drive the barge ahead. Heavens, how he gritted his teeth and made the stretcher creak to the thrust of those splendid legs! He was trying to do it all, to pull his very heart out, and when he heaved at the catch his head went back with a snap so that you would have thought he was about to break his neck.

He was disappointed when the coxswain ordered a breathing spell. The first eight was skimming far down the harbor, but soon they turned and came back at short, leisurely stretches, Mr. Ingram keeping abreast with the launch. The wind was rising. Out toward the breakwater the blue water was streaked with foam. Rough and gusty, a March blast came sweeping in against the tide. It whipped the inner harbor into choppy whitecaps, and the sailing sharpies of the bold oystermen were flying home from the Sound for shelter, reefed down and sheets paid far out.

It spoiled the water for rowing, and even the river would soon be untenable. The eights made for the boathouse, Karl Truman regretting that he could not stay out until dark. Cramped and a trifle dizzy he toiled up the runway, keeping step with the other men who carried the long barge between them. Through the open door at the landward end of the boathouse he caught a glimpse of an automobile, a very proper chauffeur in front, two ladies in the tonneau. One was Miss Janet Ingram. Aunt Kate was wholly inconsequential, merely a human being.

They were waiting for Mr. Ingram. Karl restrained a frenzied impulse to rush out and tell *her* that he was no longer a derelict but a member of a real crew. Perhaps she would be nicer to him than when Carter Avery had introduced him. Presently Stanley Foster tramped in, grasping one of the outriggers of his boat. He did not hesitate but hurried out to the automobile, a fine figure in the white sweater with the big blue "Y" on the chest, walking with that jaunty swagger of his.

How Karl envied him his debonair self-possession and his ready knack of entertaining talk! Miss Janet was evidently enjoying him. Her laugh, clear and sweet, came to Karl's ears and afflicted him with rapture and torment. He stalked into the dressing room. The sight was too much for him. He saw Mr. Ingram pass and heard the retreating hum of the motor. Stanley Foster returned to seek his own locker and the varsity quarters to which, as one of the indistinguishable herd, Karl was not admitted.

For reasons of his own, Karl preferred to walk to the campus alone. Solitude appealed to him just then. He deliberately prolonged the job of putting on his clothes, and spent an inordinate amount of time in brushing his hair. His comrades jeered him as a loafer and trooped away, noisy and jocular. Their mood jarred him. His was the pensive stage, the melancholy of the unattainable. The joy of rowing in a crew was overclouded.

He walked slowly to the campus and decided to lock himself in his room and

study until supper. While passing through the hall, Jerry Altemus caught sight of him and called out:

"Come in, Truman, I would have words with you. There is considerable doing."

Jerry reclined upon the divan, one stockinged foot propped upon a pillow.

"What's the matter with you? A game prop?" asked Karl, standing over him.

"A sprained ankle. Ouch! Don't jiggle my couch of pain. A couple of Stanley's friends blew in looking for him. You know the big brutes, Nelson and Eckersall—their idea of fun is rough-housing each other and anybody else that gets in their way. Cave men! Having nothing better to do, they fell upon me with loud cries, to muss me up a few. They did. I fought hard, put up the very devil of a defense, but they jammed me under the window seat, poured ink down my neck, and laughed like hyenas. I twisted my ankle and here I am."

"I'm as sorry as can be," cried Karl. "I'll lay for that pair next time they come into our entry. What can I do for you? Shall I get a doctor?"

"Emphatically not. I shall be able to hobble with a stick to-morrow. I have something more important to discuss. A telegram came for Stanley soon after he went down to the boathouse. I opened it, as a proper precaution. You can never tell, you know. I was going to chase down there with it, but I was too lame to walk farther than the door and had to chuck it up. Where is he? Did he come uptown with you?"

"No. He left before I did. He has a five o'clock recitation to-day, though, and if he doesn't drop in here before then I'll lay for him on the campus and give him the telegram."

"That is the cagy move, Truman. He may go from the recitation to supper at the training table and not show up until evening. It is a message from his father. The old gent is in New York and is coming up to see his hopeful, due here at seven o'clock to-night. Stanley will want to meet him at the station, of course."

"You concentrate your worry on the sprained ankle and I'll promise to find Stanley before then," Karl assured him, as he put the telegram in his pocket.

A little later Karl sprinted across the campus and searched the crowd waiting in front of a recitation hall for the stroke of the hour. There was no Stanley among them. The professor arrived, a lane opened to let him through, and his class pressed in at his heels. The doors were closed, and a few minutes after that one or two chronic laggards scurried madly in. Karl waited impatiently upon the steps until the chapel chimes struck the quarter hour. No Stanley, and useless to look for him longer. Karl was puzzled. Stanley had said nothing about cutting this recitation. It was an English literature course in which he was particularly anxious to earn good marks.

Posting back to the dormitory, Karl informed the crippled Jerry, who sighed and exclaimed:

"He can't have fallen by the wayside so soon. Yes, I am sure he intended to be on deck at five o'clock. He had the lesson down pat, and bragged this morning that he was going to rush the shirt off it. He gives me a headache at times, Truman. But he simply can't fail to be at the training table. If you catch him then he can rattle down to the station in a hack and meet the seven o'clock train."

"I shall simply have to find him," said Karl. "It will put him in all wrong with his father if he isn't Johnny on the spot."

Jerry silently anathematized the brace of hulking anarchists who had sprained his ankle. This was a matter which he should handle. He was reluctant to take Karl into his confidence, but they

were both loyal friends of Stanley. And Truman was particularly gifted at minding his own business.

"If you don't run him to earth at the training table," slowly spoke Jerry, "there will be no time for you to come back here and listen while I explain things. You are quite right. He can't afford to be missing when his father turns up. Their relations were strained not long ago. A truce is on, but parents are flighty birds. It doesn't take much to set 'em going again. I have a suspicion that Stanley has gone to West Haven to interview a certain party. It has been on his mind for several days. Poor Stanley has aged rapidly. Do you get me at all?"

"I could get you in three guesses," said Karl, with a shrug. The conference had taken a distasteful turn.

"It makes you feel sore on him. I don't blame you," Jerry went on to say. "But he is a genuinely reformed young man if ever there was one. You stood by him like a brick, Truman, and you are not the sort to quit him in a crisis. If you are willing to chase out to West Haven on the chance, and shove this telegram at him, it will do him a great service. He could hop to the station in a few minutes, you know. It is almost halfway."

"I seem to be elected," ruefully replied Karl. "I suppose I should feel like a yellow pup if I refused. Give me the street number. Your ankle may hurt, but this proposition threatens to sprain my sense of duty a good deal worse."

"Spoken like a knight-errant," cried Jerry. "A few more Karl Trumans and the world might be saved from going to the dogs, after all."

The knight-errant could not see that his errand possessed any of the effulgence of chivalry. It would serve Stanley Foster right to let him wriggle out of his own scrapes. But with Jerry Altemus helpless to aid, it seemed a scurvy trick to turn a cold shoulder. And Karl was honestly convinced that Stanley had resolved to walk the straight and narrow path. Jerry had intimated that if Stanley was really in West Haven, it was against his inclination.

His thoughts rebellious, Karl went to seek the missing oarsman at the varsity crew training table. Into this select and enviable company Karl had not yet been invited to enter. He waylaid Carter Avery, who asked him to wait inside. No doubt Stanley would drift in. He had said nothing to the contrary, and it was almost unheard of for a man to absent himself from a meal without the captain's permission. Glancing frequently at his watch, Karl fidgeted until a quarter after six. He could get to the Delaney address in thirty minutes.

"I don't understand it," said Avery. "Do you want to see him about anything important?"

"It may be. Thanks. Perhaps I can cross his trail somewhere else."

Karl ran to catch the next car from the Chapel Street corner. For the first time he found that the doctrine that Yale men should stand together might be hard to live up to. However, friendship had its obligations; and a fellow couldn't dodge them and feel square with himself.

At or about this time the twisted skein of circumstances was preparing to knot itself into another kink. When Mr. Henry Ingram had discovered the automobile waiting for him at the boathouse it was his suggestion that they take a spin into the country as far as Bridgeport and back. The crew had stopped work earlier than usual, and he was a gentleman of leisure for the rest of the afternoon. Of course Janet was very fussy about her complexion and the wind was somewhat blustering, he remarked, but fresh air was the best tonic for a growing child.

The roads were dry and hard, and the

miles fled past so pleasantly that the excursion was extended to make a rambling circuit of small towns far inland from the shore of the Sound. While they were homeward bound, Mr. Ingram exclaimed:

"As we go through West Haven I want to look up old Martin Delaney. It is right on our way. He wrote me several days ago to wish me luck with the crew and hoped I might find time to shake hands. The old codger is getting shaky on his pins, I fancy. I must take him to the boathouse in the car some afternoon when the weather turns milder."

"And who is this venerable friend?" asked Janet. "He sounds as if he might belong to your time in college."

"Another insult, and you get out and walk," rapped out her long-suffering father. "Martin Delaney was janitor of the boathouse when I was young, and a more faithful son of Eli by adoption never lived. We lads looked on him as a sort of mascot. We told him our troubles and he told us stories of the Civil War. He went out with a Connecticut regiment—was tremendously proud of his watch charm, a battered lead slug that had been dug out of his leg after Gettysburg. He always lent it to the varsity coxswain to wear strung around his neck in the Harvard race. I can swear that it brought us luck for four straight years."

"I should advise you to borrow it, Henry," suggested Aunt Kate. "Did Martin Delaney get too old to serve as janitor any longer?"

"Yes, they laid him on the shelf when he became slow and puttering. He had been a boat builder by trade, was amazingly deft with tools, and had a pretty fair knowledge of rigging a shell."

"And what happened to him when he was turned adrift from the boathouse?" demanded Janet.

"Some of us old-timers took an interest in him—he rather belonged to us—and a small fund was raised, I believe. It tided him over. Then he was granted a government pension, and a few building lots he had managed to hang onto jumped in value, rose quite fabulously for New Haven suburban real estate, and he sold out for something like fifteen thousand dollars, I've been told. So the old man is comfortably off. He wrote me that he is living with his married son, and has a little workshop by way of amusement."

A few minutes before the automobile rolled into West Haven on this kindly errand, Karl Truman, whose motive was even more altrustic, turned into a street of small but comfortable houses painted in cheerful not to say clashing tints and of an ambitious type of architecture. Each had a grassplot in front and a yard for clotheslines and chickens in the rear. Karl smiled to himself. No doubt Stanley Foster regarded such a neighborhood as this as skirting the border line of poverty. The people who lived here worked for wages, not salaries. But Karl was reminded of his own home, very much like one of these, in which dwelt contentment, affection, and thankfulness that fortune had been so kind.

Valiantly he marched up to the door bearing the number given him by Jerry Altemus. It was the mother of Hazel who answered his knock, a woman of a faded, unhappy aspect who had a temper, unless all signs failed.

"I have an important message for Mr. Stanley Foster," hurriedly announced Karl. "His roommate thought I might find him here——"

With a red spot in her cheek and a sparkle in her eye, Mrs. Delaney retorted:

"He isn't here and he hasn't been here for days. My daughter has been expecting him. I think you had better see her. Are you a college friend of his?"

"I seem to be proving it," returned Karl. "Do you happen to know whether

he is expected this evening, definitely, I mean? If so, I had better leave word for him to hustle back to the campus."

"You will have to ask Hazel. She said nothing about it to me. She will be downstairs in a minute. Please come in and sit down."

"But—but really I am in a great hurry. And so long as I can't catch Foster before seven o'clock it will do just as well to leave word if he turns up later. He is wanted at his rooms, that's all."

"I should say that he had been sticking close to his rooms," she cried, with a nervous laugh. "There comes Hazel now."

The hall was cramped quarters for a group of three, and Karl stepped into the doorway of the parlor in order to make room for Miss Hazel Delaney. She did not pounce on him, her methods were not so crude, but even while he wistfully eyed the front door he found himself maneuvered into the parlor, the line of retreat cut off. And so he had taken the trouble to find out where she lived! How sweet of him! It was an oddly early hour to call, but probably he had a college engagement for the evening. Her manner conveyed to Karl that he was in danger of being misunderstood. Not for her captivating self had he sought her out. Confound Stanley Foster in particular and all blind notions of college loyalty in general!

"And how is our mutual friend, the hard-luck brother?" she lightly queried, by way of making conversation.

"Foster? Why, I haven't noticed any symptoms of hard luck lately, except that he got rid of his automobile. Pardon me, but do you happen to know where he is?"

"Not me, Mr. Truman. I should worry!" And Hazel might have been speaking of a perfect stranger. "What? Must you be going? I had no idea you meant to walk right in and turn around and walk right out again."

"That was my intention," briefly vouchsafed the disappointing visitor.

There came another knock at the front door. It was attended to by Hazel's mother. A man's voice, deep and pleasant, was inquiring for Martin Delaney. Karl Truman felt the throes of panic. The voice was unmistakably that of Janet Ingram's father. The knight-errant was in such dire confusion of mind that when Hazel offered her hand in farewell he forgot to let go of it. No Harvard banner ever blazed a richer crimson than his honest lineaments as he stared wildly into the hall.

Henry Ingram stepped inside, glanced carelessly through the parlor doorway, and beheld a tableau the significance of which was indubitably open to misconstruction. Karl became conscious that he was the image of a Romeo, and his embarrassment increased. He had done nothing to blush for, but he only blushed the more, which quite naturally convinced Mr. Ingram that the young man was a sad case indeed.

"How are you, Truman?" murmured the coach with never a smile.

"I am feeling very feeble, thank you," blurted Karl as he made for the outer door, moving as though he were about to carry it from its hinges. Eyes fixed straight ahead he strode across the porch, halted, and groaned in spirit as he saw the waiting automobile. Hazel had followed him to the door to make the tragic mischief complete, and Janet Ingram recognized her as the siren of the glove counter. Karl had to pass within a few yards of the automobile. It was like running the guns of a hostile battery. Scathing and austere with the infallible judgments of eighteen were the violet eyes of Janet, icily chill the barely perceptible nod as Karl raised his hat. The stricken young man vanished from her sight and fled in the direction of the campus, which Janet knew, beyond all conjecture, that he disgraced.

Thus did the "swiftest little high roller" of the junior class live up to his reputation.

Henry Ingram had been conducted to a small shed in the back yard where, by the light of a lamp to help his failing sight, old Martin Delaney was sand-papering a beautifully finished model in miniature of a racing shell. A coal stove warmed the building, there was an easy, cushioned chair before it, and framed photographs of Yale crews of bygone days adorned the walls. Age had warped his back and made his hands tremulous, while the rugged features, shrewd and humorous, were marvelously wrinkled. His hearing had become a little dulled, and he was not aware that some one had entered the shop until Ingram slapped him between the shoulders.

"It's Pop himself, or I'm a liar!" shouted Martin Delaney, chuckling, wiping away a tear. "A great man you are, so I'm told. My daughter-in-law scolded me for havin' the impudence to ask you to drop in for a chat. I've been tryin' to make a bit of a keepsake for you, this shell that is patterned after the boat you rowed in when you made the record for the New London course. I had the measurements, and your seat is rigged just as it was shifted to fit that stavin' long reach of yours. A man that pulled as powerful an oar as you did couldn't help but prosper."

"I am glad to hear that things have turned out well for you, Martin."

"So they have! The last mile of my life is in fairly smooth water." The old man's mouth took a stubborn twist as he added:

"That woman would like to get it away from me, but I haven't come to my second childhood yet."

"Your daughter-in-law, Martin, is the lady you are referring to?"

"The same. She don't improve with age. My son Steve married her for her good looks, which is a mistake that boys are mighty apt to make. He is a sober, decent man, always was, but she winds him round her finger. I pay 'em a liberal amount for my board, Mr. Ingram. I'm too old and crippled up to be knockin' about without a home. And like as not I'll leave 'em all my property."

"There is a granddaughter, Martin? Didn't I get a glimpse of her in the parlor?"

"Hazel?" The patriarch slowly shook his white head. "Her mother didn't raise her right, filled her with extravagant notions, and made her greedy after money. A good-hearted girl that was spoiled. Her father don't seem to have much influence with her. It's all fine clothes and good times. She won't listen to me."

"I noticed a young chap in the parlor with her who looked like a college lad," said Henry Ingram. "There may be no harm in that, but——"

"So he's still coming out to see her," was the troubled reply.

"Has he been making a habit of it, Martin?"

"Pretty steady, though there has been some kind of a ruction in the family about him. Patched it up, have they? They hide things from me, but I get the drift of the wind. You know as well as I do, Pop Ingram, that a college boy that has a lot of money to spend is wiser to stick to the campus where he belongs. Hazel's kind of folks are not in his social squad, as you might say, and it's bound to make trouble. And a girl who gets the habit of running around with rich students is apt to look down on the kind of fellow that is ready to marry her and give her a home on a simple, everyday basis of living. Her mother takes it hard because I hold on to my money, but it's better for Hazel to work in a store, with a good job and easy hours, than to be idle. There is too much mischief afloat for a girl in a college town."

Henry Ingram tarried a few minutes longer, Martin Delaney demanding to know what were the plans for the crew season. Promising to take him out in the launch some day, the coach shook hands with genuine affection, and found his way to the street without passing through the house. Janet greeted him with the severe interrogation:

"Did you stop to talk with the entire Delaney family?"

"Only with my venerable friend. Why these frowns? Did I stay too long? Getting hungry for dinner?"

"Not at all. Did you meet Mr. Truman?"

"I saw him say good-by to a stunning-looking girl. Is she the one you told me about, Janet?"

"Yes, she is. He must have been very much surprised to run into you, Mr. Henry Ingram."

"He was, quite flabbergasted. He seemed to be on very bad terms with himself. I asked Martin Delaney something about him. The old man disapproves. The boy ought to know better. He has been tangled up for some time, it seems, out here very often."

"And taking her on joy rides to little suppers at country taverns," scornfully spake Janet. "I know all about that. And now I have seen with my own eyes——"

"His parents ought to fetch him up with a round turn," emphatically exclaimed Henry Ingram. "But I suppose they know nothing about it."

"Don't you ever dare to let Mr. Truman pass the threshold of our house," declared the Adorable Problem. "If you have any intention of trying to reclaim him, please take him off somewhere else."

CHAPTER X.

Not ten minutes after Karl had set forth from the campus on his ill-starred mission to West Haven, Stanley Foster dashed into his rooms, stopped short at sight of disconsolate Jerry and the sprained ankle, and breathlessly exclaimed:

"Hard luck, old man! How did you do it? Anybody looking after you? I wonder if I'm too late to snatch a few eats at the training table? Carter Avery will skin me alive for being late. Whew, but this has been some busy little afternoon!"

"You don't begin to know how busy it is," Jerry replied in tones of profound disgust. "Where in thunder did you lose yourself?"

"The trouble began on a trolley car coming up from the boathouse—fat woman with a big valise—lost her purse—all her money and the address of the house where she was going to take a job as cook—stranger in our town—thought it was out Whitney Avenue, people named Coxe. Fat woman dissolved in tears! As a helpless proposition she was the limit. I couldn't desert her, Jerry. Nobody else offered to lend her a hand. So I chartered a cab—young Mr. Foster, large, hysterical lady, big valise, and cruised out Whitney Avenue after consulting a telephone book and a directory. All known Coxes had cooks. Then my hefty protégée guessed the name wasn't Coxe but something like Montague. I suggested Capulet, but it never touched her. Nary a Montague could we dig up, but with a flash of that astuteness for which I am justly famous I took a flyer on Montgomery. A bull's-eye, Jerry! I dumped my fat friend and the large valise on the correct Montgomery doorstep half an hour ago, 'way out near East Rock, and then I beat it for the campus."

"That cook came near spoiling your broth, my son," observed Jerry. "Now you just imagine that you have been to supper, and you make tracks to meet the seven o'clock express from New York. Your dear father will be among those present."

"Great Cæsar, are you joking? Did he telegraph?"

"Hours ago. I sent Karl Truman scouting after you. As a last resort, he legged it out to West Haven."

"The bully boy! But see here, Jerry, he is the last man I want to see butting into my personal affairs."

"Grateful pup, aren't you. I was ashamed to ask him to do it. But he knew there was such a person as Hazel."

"And I haven't had the sand to answer that letters of hers," cried Stanley. "I wonder how long my father expects to linger 'neath the elms? He hasn't visited his dear old Alma Mater in years and years. Pleasant for me, with this complication on my hands. Do you think she honestly means to make trouble for me, Jerry?"

"Trouble and Hazel walk hand in hand, you poor boob. My advice as a man of the world is to tell your father all about it and let him take charge."

"But he'll murder me."

"He ought to, but he knows better than any one else what an imbecile you are and maybe he will make allowances. Fetch him up here and I'll say what I can in your favor. It won't be much, for I cannot tell a lie."

An hour later Stanley sat at dinner in the Hotel Taft with a well-groomed, florid gentleman whose demeanor was notably amiable. He felt reason to be proud of his son who had so promptly abandoned his idle habits and was making an excellent record in college.

"I left home at an hour's notice," he explained, "was summoned to a directors' meeting in New York. I did not wire you en route because I knew I should find you right on the job. No more gadding about, eh?"

"I don't know what New York looks like," soberly answered the son. "And I have almost forgotten how to steer an automobile."

"Virtue should be its own reward, Stanley, but you don't look very happy. And where is your appetite? A crew man pecking at good food like a blessed little dickey bird? Studying too hard? Not accustomed to it?"

Stanley raised miserable eyes from his plate. There was wisdom in Jerry Altemus' counsel. Confession was the only way out of it.

"I—I—have something on my mind," he faltered. "I didn't want to bother you with it, but I can't figure out what to do."

"Bills, Stanley? How much? Let's look them over this evening. I promise not to kick up a row. I was partly responsible. You had no idea of the value of money."

"No, it is a girl," said the culprit in a dying voice. "I thought I was awfully fond of her and—and—I really wasn't, you know, and she didn't care a darn for me. Her mother is a fierce proposition, and between them—I, well, I wrote her some sappy letters and they think you are rotten with money, and I was an easy mark, and——"

The plaintive voice died entirely. Its owner gazed into space with an expression so wan and abject that it must have been a monster of a parent whose heart should not have been moved rather to sympathy than wrath. It was obvious that the young man had reaped his own punishment. His father appeared properly shocked, remained silent while Stanley awaited his doom, and then spoke up briskly:

"She was pretty, of course, and worked in a Chapel Street store or something of the sort. They usually do. Her manners were crude, but you reasoned that once you were married a year abroad and all that would polish off these trifling flaws. When you told that your allowance had been curtailed and that your father was not the kind of man you had always supposed him to be, her heart grew cold."

"Say, father, what kind of a wizard are you?" cried the dazed Stanley.

"Your type is perennial, my son. What is the name of the beautiful creature?"

"Delaney. Hazel Delaney."

"Delaney? The name sounds familiar. Let me see. I used to know a Martin Delaney. Your coach, Mr. Ingram, would know him even better than I. He worked in the boathouse for years. I was not a rowing man, but everybody knew Martin. He was an institution. It is a common name. Probably no connection."

"I don't know about that," cried Stanley, grasping at a new lease of life. "Her grandfather is the very man, I'll bet a hat. He has a little shop where he does carpenter work. But he used to be connected with the college, is interested in rowing, and his name is Martin."

"I sincerely wish that I could lay you over my knee and spank you until the dust flew," fervently exclaimed the elder Foster. "After dinner you will find a trustworthy cabman and send him with a note to Martin Delaney. I will write it and he will come back in the cab to have a talk with me. I don't want you around, Stanley. Go to your rooms and I'll join you later in the evening. I am extremely glad that I ran up to New Haven at this time."

The cabman dutifully fetched the superannuated janitor of the Yale boathouse, who had delayed to invest himself in his best suit of black clothes. He hobbled into the ornate hotel, and peered about him in an unwonted state of excitement. This was one of his great days. Mr. Foster led him by the arm to a corner lounge, ordered cigars and two high balls, and listened while Martin babbled:

"When I put on my spectacles and held your note close to the light and made out the name of Archibald Foster I didn't know what to say. It looked like a kind of general reunion. Why, Pop Ingram was at the house less than two hours ago. He came after your time, didn't he?"

"A trifle. I was graduated the year before he entered."

"But to think that two men like you wanted to see old Martin Delaney again! I supposed the college thought I was dead and buried. No Yale man was ever a better friend to me that you were, Mr. Foster."

"I was glad to do you a favor, Martin, and I never expected to remind you of it. But I want you to do something for me."

"Anything in my power, Mr. Foster. It was your freshman year, wasn't it, that you lived in the house where my wife and me tried takin' student roomers. She died and I gave it up. They were too hard to handle. I had borrowed money to hold those buildin' lots in West Haven. It was the only chance I could see to make provision for old age. And things went wrong, and I was about to lose everything I had when you stepped in and lent me five hundred dollars on my note. Coaxed your dad into letting you have it against your next year's allowance. I paid it back, thank God, but it pulled me through a tight place."

"Yes, I was a freshman, Martin, but I had sense enough to see that you were a man who did not deserve misfortune. Well, what I want to tell you is that my boy Stanley, a junior, is acquainted with a Miss Hazel Delaney. She and her mother have decided to make it unpleasant for him. What are we going to do about it? How much do you know? Can I ask you to help me? You are not a man to stand for any proposition to frighten a silly boy."

"So they have put up a job on him," angrily croaked the old man, his faded eyes ablaze. "It's mostly the woman, Mr. Foster, but I didn't know she would

go that far. And it's your boy! Damned if I'll allow it. Breach of promise?"

"Something like that, I infer. The boy is straight."

"It will be settled as soon as I put foot in the house to-night, Mr. Foster. I have made a will, but I'll tear it up and leave my money to Yale College if this foolishness is not choked off. And maybe I can talk to the girl, away from her mother, and make her see the wrong course she is steering. Archibald Foster's son! I am glad you sent for me. Put it out of your mind. They will find that the old man has a punch left in him. They'll do as I say, or I'll tear up the will under their noses and send for a lawyer to make another one this very night."

"I don't know how to thank you, Martin. If you will see to it that the boy's asinine letters are destroyed——"

"Every last one of them, Mr. Foster. That woman monkeyed with a buzz saw this time. How long will you stay in New Haven?"

"I must leave to-morrow. My boy will be grateful to you, Martin."

"I am not blaming him, Mr. Foster, but I wish the college lads like him would stay away from girls like Hazel. Now and then the scrape is more serious for both of them than this one."

"I shall talk to my boy straight from the shoulder," said the father.

In this fortuitous manner was Stanley released from his entanglement, freed from his folly. It was the next afternoon, at the boathouse, when he met Karl Truman and paused to say, with awkward hesitation:

"That was a fine thing you did for me, going out to West Haven with a message."

"It was very annoying for me," frankly returned Karl. "I met Mr. Ingram there. And I can't explain to him, without telling tales on you."

"What was he there for?" anxiously asked Stanley.

"To see old Martin Delaney. I heard that much."

This was unwelcome tidings. Stanley wondered if the coach had heard his name mentioned in the Delaney household. Alas, this was Stanley Foster's opportunity to show what measure of manly nobility was in his soul. But he flinched and wavered, and was lost. It was his part to say to Karl that if there was any danger of misunderstanding, if Mr. Ingram possibly surmised that Karl visited the Delaney household on his own account, he, Stanley, would take it upon himself to exculpate the loyal friend.

Karl stood waiting, but nothing more was said. There was a shadow of sorrow in his eyes, for he comprehended that, although Stanley Foster had passed the tests of scholarship, he was not yet prepared to stand the more vital and searching test of The Golden Rule, than which no better code was ever penned to guide the gentleman.

"Miss Ingram and her aunt were in front of the Delaneys', in their car," said Karl, at length. "It was not too dark for them to recognize me. They as much as cut me dead. It hurt. You may as well know it."

"You must have imagined it, Karl, old man. I'm sorry, but I don't quite see what I can do about it. It is a perfectly respectable house for you to be seen coming out of."

"You don't quite see? Well, then, we'll chop out the argument. You have made Hazel Delaney mighty conspicuous, made her talked about in a way that you can't feel proud of. You haven't forgotten the night I met you in the tavern at Harkness Cove. You were anxious to keep under cover, anxious to square yourself with me, so anxious that you tried to bribe me next day. But it seems to you a mere trifle if Mr. Ingram, the coach of the crew, and Mr. Ingram's family, find *me* with Hazel Delaney."

"If you look at it that way and want to make an issue of it——" sulkily muttered Stanley.

"You have made the issue. I overlooked certain things you said to me because I wanted to see you on the crew. And I did you a service last night because I honestly believed in you, and in your friendship. I don't want you to go to Mr. Ingram and tell him anything to clear me. I can stand on my own feet without being propped up, which is more than you can say. But I did expect you to say that you were willing to go to Mr. Ingram."

"And put him wise to this whole affair of mine, that I want to forget?" hotly expostulated Stanley. "My father was perfectly bully about it, fixed it up in a jiffy, forgave me like the brick that he is. It is all dead and done for."

"Your father let you off too easy, perhaps," suggested Karl. "But that is none of my business. You'll never know how much I admired you, Stanley, and I have faith somehow that I can admire you again some day. But you won't do. You had your chance just now and you fell down with a crash."

"Then we part company? I'm tremendously sorry, Karl. Is there no way for me to repay all you have done for me?"

"No, not even at three dollars an hour for tutoring you."

TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE, ON SALE AUGUST 7TH.

THE GREATEST HORSE IN THE WORLD

JAMES THATCHER, the theatrical manager, once put on a dramatization of "Black Beauty." Obviously, in such a dramatization the most important thing was the horse. Thatcher decided that, in order for the play to make a hit, he must get possession of the most beautiful black horse in the world, a black horse with a white star in his forehead and a white stocking.

Here is his story of his search for Black Beauty:

"I spent over three hundred dollars in railroad fare looking for that horse. I went over the whole stock of Barnum & Bailey's horses, Ringling's animals, and every other big circus in the United States. I went everywhere that I could think of as being a place likely to produce the most wonderful black horse in the world. And every time I was disappointed. At last I began to haunt the livery stables.

"One day in Boston I walked into a stable and told the owner what sort of a horse I wanted. By this time I was getting impatient and peevish.

"'I want the greatest black horse in the world,' I explained, 'but I have no real hope of finding him here.'

"The man said he had seen such a horse in Lynn, Massachusetts, but he did not believe I could buy the animal, which was a pet, a sort of a show horse. However, I went to Lynn, and I found the horse and his owner. That horse was the most wonderful black horse in the world.

"The owner had bought him from Thomas W. Lawson for five hundred dollars because, as a colt, he had developed a split hoof which none of the crack veterinarians had been able to cure. After the purchase the man to whom I was talking had dug up a country veterinarian up in Maine and had had the split hoof cured. When I saw the horse, he was great. He had plenty of spirit on the road, and yet he was so gentle that children could ride him. After a lot of talk I paid the man fifteen hundred dollars for that black beauty. It marked the end of the most exhaustive search ever made for a horse.

"The play? That's another story. It was not a hit."

The Hill Billy Tries for Office

By William H. Hamby

Author of "Cold Potatoes and Ten Dollars," "The Hill Billy Starts a Store," Etc.

One notable instance of the breaking into the legislature of an inexperienced youth of twenty-four, with a peaked head and straw-colored hair, a mere hill billy who had never made a speech in his life and had more bitter enemies in his home town than any man in the county

THE announcement caused more surprise and amusement than anything that had happened in Wahoo City since Lizzie Bender knocked down the clown who tried to walk with her to the grand stand in Sells' Brothers' circus.

The hill billy wanted to be Representative!

It surprised them because, given ten guesses of what he wanted, not one of Wahoo City's seven hundred inhabitants would have ever remotely suspicioned that Lafe Jason had political ambitions. It amused them because he seemed so totally unfitted for the office of representative in the legislature. That he had business shrewdness they had been compelled to admit. Without capital or experience, single-handed he had fought the old-time business gang—Birkins, Ames, Hilman, and Walters, up from nothing to a bank account of ten thousand dollars. But representative? Why, pshaw! he was no speaker. And to Wahoo County, a preacher, a lawyer, or a politician *must* be a talker—a man who in fifteen minutes of oratory could unroll two hundred yards of the star-spangled, and nine miles of flowers, and unravel mysteries until the loose ends of theories waved around him as thick as the kinks on a pickaninny's head. Lafe had not, as far as they knew, ever made a speech in his life. He had not—in public. But perhaps if there had been dictographs in the woods pasture lot back of old man Jason's farm during Lafe's boyhood, there might have been enough oratory gathered to fill the *Congressional Record*—at least the blanks.

Ambitions are queer things, and motives still queerer. If the original motive that prompted some of the noblest deeds and most honorable careers the world has known could be laid bare they would be very, very amusing—after we got over being shocked.

Lafe Jason was not running for representative because of a consuming patriotic desire to swat the railroads, boot the insurance combine, or to muss up the nice, comfortable seventeen-year courts. No, his office-seeking fever was the ripening of a germ dropped into his system by a boyhood vision. A good while ago when he was a rather thin-faced, peaked-headed, dreamy-eyed boy of fourteen—about the time old man Jason had declared Lafe would have to be a farmer because he wasn't fit for anything else, but would starve to death at it because he would not hurry; and Uncle Dan'l Jason and all the neighbors had urged Lafe's pa to hire him out to somebody that would "l'arn" him to work, somewhere along about that time Lafe had had a vision. It was a good deal like Joseph's, only he made his up out of the whole cloth of day desire instead of night dreaming. He would go away and become one of the greatest

men in the world; and then he would come back—clear back to Bethel Springs some fine summer day driving a spanking team of blacks, hitched to a carriage with silver mountings, and he would wear a Prince Albert coat and a silk hat—and gloves.

Now Lafe cared nothing about politics. He would much rather go on and make his fortune; but to Wahoo County, no man was a very great man who did not hold office. Politics was the one mark of distinction.

"Nina"—Lafe stirred and jumped down from the counter of the new store, a grin remaining from these musings—"how many votes do you think I'll get?"

Nina, the head clerk and real manager of Jason's store, did not reply at once. She frowned a little. Truth was Nina was worried about this new digression of Lafe's. She had been jubilant over his last financial triumphs. But even she doubted if he was "cut out" for the office of representative.

"I don't know, Lafe." The tone of doubt implied it might not be very many.

Lafe understood and grinned more broadly. "Chances mighty slim, you think? Well, I guess I am not as popular as a free barbecue. Still I feel pretty sure of one—Lanky Turner will vote for me."

Nina did not laugh. It was too serious.

"Lafe, what are you running for representative for anyway?"

"To be elected," replied Lafe, smiling with a pleasant sort of finality. He got his hat and went out on the street.

Lafe was looking for a man—in fact, several men. It was before the primary wave, in the good old days of county conventions. The first thing Lafe must do was to get the nomination by his party. As luck would have it the party just then had three bosses instead of one; so each of the three candidates could have one apiece. The one which fell to Lafe's lot was Denton Hardy, of Wahoo City, who was backing Jason solely because he was an enemy of the other two bosses who had refused to indorse him for the Wahoo City post office. Lafe accepted Hardy as a gift from the gods, but was not pinning any great faith to him. Jason had gone about it in his own way, and had written one or two men in each township to come to Wahoo City during the present week. One of these was Windy Jim Davis, of Buckeye Bridge.

Windy had just arrived and was tying his uncurried, bony grays to the hitch rack in front of Colson's blacksmith shop. Windy was a fellow who talked entirely too much, and worked entirely too little. He could not get credit for a peck of wheat bran; and his word would not be taken on oath. And yet nearly everybody liked him, and, in one way or another, he mustered a good deal of influence.

"How's everything over at the county seat, Windy?" asked Lafe.

"Not excitin' enough to cause a runaway," replied Windy.

"How do you think my chances are over there?" he inquired.

"Well," Windy looked judicial—"they ain't much worse than anybody else's. Dodson favored Sarvis Point for the county seat, and, of course, he won't get none of our votes. And the fellers say if they elect Billard we'll have to chip in and loan him the price of a ticket to Jeff City—and then he'll drink up all his wages, and we'll have to chip in to get him home again—or else"—Windy scratched his head—"just let him stay, but we'd have to support his family."

Lafe took Windy to the hotel for dinner and had a long talk with him. He met other fellows from different townships during the next few days and had talks with them. That is, he let them talk a long time, made a few sugges-

tions. The hill billy had a natural genius of seeing straight—he knew just where his strength and weakness lay, and exactly where to work, and where to lay low.

Luckily at Wahoo City four of his five bitter enemies—Birkins, Ames, Walters, and Duncan—belonged to the opposite party. So with the help of Hardy he got his home delegation. Some other scattering townships were also won. And when the county convention met, Lafe so played his vote as to appear the weakest man on the first ballot; then second on the next ballot. This was the limit of his strength, for Dodson, of Sarvis Point, was much in the lead. But the moment the Buckeye Bridge man went to third, in a panic the county seat threw all its votes to Jason to keep the nomination from going to their old rival, Sarvis Point.

The cheering was not very wild when it was announced that Lafe Jason, of Wahoo City, was the nominee for representative. They called on him for a speech, but he merely arose in his seat and said:

"Gentlemen, I thank you. I hope to thank you some more after the November election."

II.

The following week the other party held its convention and nominated for representative one of Lafe's Wahoo City enemies, Attorney Duncan.

Now, Duncan was a lawyer who had the outward dignity, ponderosity, and fat of a fifty-thousand-dollar corporation counsel; and the inward littleness and cunning meanness of a ten-dollar city snitch and a five-dollar village jackleg. But he had heavy eyelids and a fat neck and a way of saying, "My honored fellow citizens," which awoke the echoes in the backwoods. Moreover he had a very nice little piece well memorized about "Grand Old Missouri," and the "glorious Ozarks" that had been getting results in the way of cheers from all public assemblies for lo! these many years.

Besides, he had a goodly supply of well-seasoned, kiln-dried jokes that had been gathered back in the reap-hook days of the republic, which, without any mental effort on anybody's part, he could roll down the well-worn grooves in his audience's brain, thereby producing a rattle that resembled a laugh. And lastly he possessed, for rare political occasions, a gorgeously colored checked silk vest and heavy gold watch fob that somehow always suggested to a Wahoo City audience the halls of Congress. In fact, it was let out privately that the only reason the Honorable Duncan had consented to condescend to run for so small an office as representative in the State legislature was because of an understanding that this was to be merely a stepping-stone to Washington.

Yes, Attorney Duncan was a formidable opponent. None knew that better than Lafe Jason. He thoroughly understood the mind of these bucolic citizens of Wahoo County—a mind which, in spite of its own honesty and common sense, was peculiarly susceptible to be captivated by sham doctrines and sham personalities. Perhaps it was an instinctive yearning for color, a desire for the romantic, the unusual, the spectacular. Whatever the cause, sounding brass and tinkling cymbals nearly always got them on the run—yelling "hurrah" at every jump.

Most people still looked upon Lafe's candidacy as a huge joke. The two main bosses, who had been beaten in the convention, were so disgusted they had kicked over the traces and were skulking in the shade. Even Hardy, now that he had his revenge on the other two, was not enthusiastic about his candidate.

But the murkiest of gloom was in the souls of the other candidates on the ticket with Lafe—the fellows nominated

for the good, fat offices of county clerk, sheriff, recorder, and treasurer. The candidate for representative was always looked to for the heft of the campaigning—he was to pull the ticket through. And with an unexperienced youth of twenty-four, with a peaked head and straw-colored hair, a mere hill billy who had never made a speech in his life, and had more bitter enemies in his home town than any man in the county—why, defeat was certain for the whole ticket.

These other candidates held two or three little secret caucuses among themselves to discuss how they might pull themselves through in spite of the head of the ticket.

One day each candidate got a rather peremptory notice from the candidate for representative to meet Tuesday night in the new store.

They all came, half guiltily, wholly uneasy. But Lafe had the faculty of making people feel at ease—if he wanted them to. Without saying a dozen words himself he got them all in a good humor, and started to discussing ways and means for the campaign.

He listened mostly, but somehow without their knowing—a question, a puzzled look of doubt, a slight nod or shake of the head—he guided their discussions so they reached pretty satisfactory conclusions. Only once did he make any direct statements—and that a few minutes before adjournment; he stood up and looked down at his fellow candidates scattered around with chairs tipped back against the wall, and said:

"Gentlemen, we must pull together." His eyes, usually pale blue, took on that dark-gray color, his lids narrowed slightly, his lips shut closely—and his tone sounded as final as the Ten Commandments. "I am going to be elected representative—and expect to help every man on the ticket—who is entitled to help. But if there is a man on the ticket who suggests or lets his friends scratch my name to swap for votes for him—that candidate will be snowed under so deep a red-hot snowplow can't get him out in time for the Judgment Day."

The candidates went away that night—wonderfully encouraged—but dreadfully scared, wondering if Lafe had heard of any of their political sins, and vowing to be more righteous office seekers hereafter.

III.

One day late in August Lafe was at his desk in his store, and, having finished some letters, sat watching Nina Wingate, head clerk and manager of the store. There was a temporary lull in trade, and Nina was standing with her elbow resting on the telephone ledge, looking out of the window. He had never seen her look more troubled and perplexed.

A smile, a sort of comforting, grateful smile, crossed his face.

"Oh, Nina!" he called, and she came back toward the desk. She saw by the flicker of a grin at the corners of his mouth he had just thought of something to tell.

"Yes?" she questioned, stopping by the counter in front of him.

"Seeing you looking out of the window reminded me of my last year in the academy," he said. "I was digging around in every sort of way to keep going. A quarter looked as big to me as the full moon—and, like the full moon, sometimes did not come up for two weeks. I used to get awful blue. One day I was all doubled up over the old three-legged table in my room, feeling like a loaf of bread with the yeast left out, when Bill Barker, my roommate, came in.

"Bill walked up and gave me a punch in the back. 'Cheer up, Lafe; this ain't hell!'"

Nina laughed and blushed. She saw the application—and knew he had guessed she was worrying over his campaign.

"I am bothered about it, Lafe," she confessed. "I declare I don't know what you wanted to do it for. But, of course, now that you are running I want you to win—but for the life of me I don't see how you can."

"I don't, either," he answered cheerfully.

"Birkins and Hilman and Ames and Walters—all that gang—will do anything in the world to beat you."

"They surely will," nodded Lafe.

"They are already at it."

"They are." Again he nodded.

"They'll spend money—and tell lies and buy votes—and just work their heads off," she went on.

"I hope so." Lafe grinned.

"Honestly, Lafe"—Nine was a little nettled—"where do you expect to get your votes—and how are you going to get them?"

The hill billy squinted his right eye at the toe of his shoe for a minute and flipped his foot up and down.

"Really, I don't know yet, Nina." He got up, and every vestige of amusement left his face. It was the most deadly serious, the most anxious, profoundly anxious look she had ever seen in his eyes. "I don't know. But I want to be elected. It means—it means to me—what a Christmas tree does to a child. And, Nina"—there was appeal in his tone—"don't you ever doubt but I'll be elected. I don't know how—but there is a way."

Lafe started out horseback next morning. That was before the days of intensive farming in politics. Voters were appealed to en masse; elections were won by torchlights, brass bands, and stampedes. Duncan had already opened the campaign. He had begun with a boom like an old mortar cannon, and followed it with a fusillade of abuse and ridicule of his opponent. The only original material in Duncan's speeches was the vicious thrusts at the hill billy. He really had some ability in the line of vituperation, an ability entirely unhampered by any restraining sense of decency and fair play. Outside of town Lafe stopped at the first farm he came to, and went over into the field, where a man was breaking stubble, and talked to him a quarter of an hour. This he repeated off and on all day.

Now Lafe had one big advantage—an asset that no one knew he had, and that he himself was unconscious of. Instinctively he knew what not to say. He had a rare sort of imagination—a sort of projecting sympathy by which he seemed always to know in advance how a fellow would feel about a thing. He never spoke of the rockiness of a field to the plowman who owned it; nor referred to the smoothness of it to the hired man. He did not predict rain to the fellow who was praying it would not until his second crop of clover was in the barn; and he never bragged of the children to the woman who was worried to death with them on wash day.

"That representative feller was around this morning," said old Budd Smith at the forks of the road to Mel Simmons. "And, by goose, he ain't half as big a fool as a feller might think."

"He shore ain't," nodded Mel vigorously. "I met him down just this side of the ford and had quite a chat with him. Ain't very talkative, but he is a right friendly fellow. I'll bet my next cocklebur crop if he goes to Jeff City he'd purty near know what was going on. They say he made old man Birkins and them Wahoo City fellers slip a cog or two. I'm glad of it—I wish he'd skinned old Birkins out of every cent he's got. The onery old rascal sold me a Sunday suit last spring that's

faded out now until it looks like the old woman's wash dress."

And Lafe was still riding on.

IV.

Candidate Duncan was thick-skinned, as any wholesale dealer in oratorical platitudes is sure to be, but even he felt a change in the political atmosphere before two weeks had passed. His audiences laughed less readily, and cheered less boisterously when he got off his stock ridicule of Lafe Jason. Duncan also noticed that people around Wahoo City were not winking and hee-hawing so much when mention was made of the hill billy's candidacy.

Duncan redoubled his efforts, which meant he rewhetted his knife, puffed out his chest like a bagpipe, and "gave it" to his opponent stronger and louder than ever. He boasted that he would scorch him so he would be fuller of blisters than Job was of boils.

Lafe got back to his store at Wahoo City the tenth of September, after having made a complete circuit of the county on horseback. He had not seen everybody, but he had seen a lot of them—and had done good work.

"I've made votes," he told Nina confidently, "but not nearly enough—only about a third enough."

Among his mail Lafe found an invitation to meet his opponent in joint debate at the Woodmen Log Rolling, to be held at Sarvis Point the eighteenth. Without waiting to open the rest of his mail, he went to the telephone, called up the Woodmen committee at Sarvis Point, and accepted the invitation.

During the day Denton Hardy, who had been made county chairman, came around.

"Jason," he said bluntly, "it seems to me it is about time you were doing something in this campaign. Duncan is just running clear off from you. I know you ain't no speaker, but you've got to make a stagger at it."

"Yes"—Lafe kept a straight face—"I see your point, Hardy. I've just been planning to do a little speaking. As you say, not much, but a little to let the people know, if I was covered with a gun and had to speak or be shot, I could get off 'The boy stood on the burning deck'—or something of that sort."

"They've been after me hot and heavy for a debate between you and Duncan," said Hardy. "But I've crawfished out of it every way possible. Told 'em debates were out of date, and that you were suffering with a sore throat, and that our committee advised a dignified campaign—and several other pieces of rot.

"Of course, I know as well as you do that a debate would be the ruination of the whole ticket. That Duncan is a terror in a debate. I tell you, he's sharp, and he's a orator. They are going to run him for Congress after he's been to the legislature—that is, if he is elected." Hardy did not seem very hopeful that he would not be.

"I am going to meet him at the Woodmen Log Rolling in debate," said Lafe nonchalantly.

"Great Jumping Jimmy Rogers! You ain't!" exclaimed the chairman, horrified. "Why, Jason, he'll just eat you up and spit you out. That won't never do in the world—you must get out of it—take the typhoid—do anything."

"No," said Lafe, shaking his head. "I got to do it. I never made a speech in public in my life—and I'll probably get walloped all over the platform. Yet, as Clem Johnson says, nevertheless and notwithstanding, et cetera and but, I'll be there just the same."

V.

The Woodmen Log Rolling was a big affair. When Lafe arrived at Sarvis

Point at nine o'clock that Thursday morning it appeared that half the county was already present, and every road was pouring more into town by wagon loads, buggy loads, and horseback cavalcades like corn ears sliding into a power sheller.

Jason was scared. He had been scared for a week. The debate between the two candidates for representative was to be held from ten to twelve that morning. Duncan was to speak first. Each was to have an hour.

Lafe looked at his watch four times in the next ten minutes. He had a sensation at the pit of his stomach as though he had been suffering a month with dyspepsia and had suddenly eaten a quart of half-done beans.

Duncan had been there since the night before. Sarvis Point had no saloons, but there were three well-stocked drug stores. One, Hamp Ladder's, was a particular favorite on political occasions. Lafe saw Duncan enter it several times, followed almost immediately by one, two, four, eight men, who always looked cornerwise out of their eyes, moistened their lips, and asked if there was a drink of water back of the prescription case. Each time Duncan came out he was a little redder along the folds of his neck which supported his oratorical chin and a little louder of voice and quicker of breath. Duncan was not at all uneasy about who saw him. He went on the theory that he could always square himself by his oratorical praise of sobriety with the drys, and it was the drinks that counted with the wets.

At half past nine Lafe ran on to Windy Jim Davis. He had been looking for Windy for half an hour.

"You scared, Lafe?" Windy asked.

"Scared?" Lafe grinned rather yellowishly. "Why, my knees wabble like a loose belt on a threshing machine, and my hair stands up so stiff it would hold up a pressure of fourteen pounds to the square inch. Windy, you can make people mad pretty easy, can't you?"

"Say," Windy winked his left eye and took on his look of guileless boastfulness, "I tell you what I can do. I can take two peaceable old Plymouth Rock hens that have been raised in Sunday school and fed out of the same spoon all their lives, and in two minutes I can have them so fighting mad they imagine they have spurs and cluck brimstone."

Lafe laughed. "I've got a job for you. Get to Duncan as soon as possible—get help if you need it—tell him something, anything you want to that will make him tearing mad."

"Good-by!" Windy started with a grin. "I'll be around for the two dollars after dinner."

Whatever his faults Windy was a zealous friend when once enlisted, and he took particular pains to do this job well. He got three other champion jokers to help him, and, one at a time, they stopped Duncan, shook hands with him, and asked if he had heard Lafe Jason was going to accuse him of not having paid his taxes last year.

It was a mere guess on Windy's part, but a shrewd one, that he had not. And when the chairman called the vast assembly to order and invited the two speakers to come to the platform, Duncan's fat face was redder than six glasses of beer would justify; and his small eyes were ferociously malignant. He gave the hill billy a look charged with such threatening and slaughter that Lafe began to feel around in his pocket for a five-dollar bill for Windy Jim.

To Lafe's amazement, to the chairman's, to the whole audience's, when the Honorable Attorney Duncan was announced, he shot his fist into the air, his face purpling, and bellowed:

"I understand my contemptible opponent is telling it around that I haven't paid my last year's taxes. Well, if I

haven't, I didn't steal the money to pay them."

Lafe felt such a relief at the evident addled and befuddled anger of his opponent that he smiled in spite of his own panic.

Duncan got himself under some control, and delivered his set speech, only more vehemently and vindictively than ever. He abused and ridiculed his opponent as only an old-time politician could have done. The first sallies raised a big laugh and loud cheering from his friends. The next were not quite so funny, and, after an hour's harangue, his most ridiculous stories, when applied to the hill billy, scarcely raised a cackle or a clap. Even in his half-intoxicated state Duncan felt he was not calling out as wildly uproarious cheers as he deserved. His time was up, but ignoring the gentle warning tap on the table by the meek, bewhiskered, nice, old gentleman who was chairman, he launched into another oratorical gallop, and demanded to know who could make laws, if not lawyers. How could an ignorant backwoods boy, who knew nothing of law, make laws?

On this line he used up a half hour of Lafe's time, and the audience was getting restive. He closed with a bombastic eulogy of the dear people, and thanked them for the overwhelming vote they would give his party, and congratulated them in advance on having the good sense to keep his honorable opponent at home—where he could not bring ridicule on the county.

There was considerable cheering, a little forced but loud, when he sat down, mopping his fat, red face.

The chairman arose and introduced the opposing candidate—"Honorable Lafe Jason."

Lafe had been too amused at Duncan's outbreak to get angry. He had thought of fifty apt retorts, and had mapped out a strong line of argument. But as he got to his feet the worst case of stage fright on record seized him. That full feeling at the pit of his stomach became acute indigestion. He was afraid to bend his knees enough to step forward lest they cave in. His throat felt as choking full as though stuffed with paper wads. His hands sweated, his eyes saw the audience as a dancing mirage over a dusty field.

He perceived he was near the edge of the platform, and that the very large audience was intently still; curiously, wonderingly still. He also perceived there was not a single idea anywhere in his head, and that his tongue was riveted to the hot boiler plate at the top of his mouth.

Almost mechanically he turned and addressed the chairman, and then his eyes lighted on the still sweating, puffing, indignant Honorable Duncan, who had had too many beers.

An inspiration shot through Lafe's mind and cleared it like a stroke of lightning. He remembered in that flash that he could whistle—that he was an excellent whistler. He turned very deliberately from what the audience took to be purposeful consideration of Duncan, toward the crowd, and, with a smile, he puckered his lips, and, clear and musical, came the one tune that every man, woman, and child in the hills knew—the old play tune:

> We'll all go down to Rowser's,
> To Rowser's, to Rowser's,
> Because he keeps good beer.

The audience caught the thrust in a flash, and felt good for having caught it. It was a retort that tickled them clear down to their leather heels, and they proceeded to say so in the most uproarious clapping and laughing and whistling and shouting that had ever greeted an opening speech.

After that Lafe made a very good twenty-minute speech. He did not need to, but he did. He said nothing about his opponent, but remarked:

"You have been told lawyers have

always made the laws of this State. You have also noticed it takes forever for anybody to find out what those laws are.

"We've had a calf-stealing case in this county that's been in the courts eight years and has cost seventeen thousand dollars.

"If the lawyers can't do any better than that, it strikes me as a very good time for somebody else to try it."

Lafe didn't get into any oratory, and he felt he was through. Somehow he did not know how to close. No humorous story came to him, and no resounding false sentiment appealed to him. For just a moment he hesitated and panic hovered near. It would never do just to sit down like he had run out. The only thing that came to him was a verse of poetry he used to quote in the academy. It had nothing to do with the subject, but he leaned toward the audience, looked, and felt very solemn, and repeated, with dramatic effect, one verse from the "Chambered Nautilus."

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll.
Leave the low-vaulted past,
Let each new temple nobler than the last
Shut thee from heaven with dome more vast,
Until thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by Life's unresting sea.

"Thank you!" He bowed and sat down. And what he heard from that audience and saw made him feel more like a man than any experience of his life.

VI.

One night ten days before the election five "prominent" business men met in the rear room of the Birkins Big Brick Store. Horatio Ames, with a small chrysanthemum, the worse by one day's wear, in the buttonhole of his coat, sat with his right ankle resting on his left knee, chewing the ends of his mustache meditatively. Ben Hilman, glum and ugly, sat back, leaning against the molasses barrel. Clabe Henderson crouched on a coil of rope. Alfred Walters, the debonair bank cashier, sat cautiously and daintily on the edge of an opened box of dry goods, while Birkins himself occupied a chair and leaned forward with hands ready to gesture.

This was the old ring, the old commercial gang of Wahoo City, who for years had gone on selling and buying at a profit of sixty-nine per cent; and who by secret coöperation had always made the sleepy little town a red-hot strip of desert sand for any newcomer who tried to start a store. And none ever lasted a year until Lafe Jason, the hill billy, came, without capital or previous training, and bested them in a half dozen efforts to run him out. In fact, in the two years' fight against the young fellow, they had among them lost over fifteen thousand dollars, most of which the hill billy had annexed to his own bank account—which he kept at Sarvis Point.

But this meeting was not business—it was politics. No cabal ever met with a solemner sense of duty to save the county. None ever took itself more seriously. The steady gain of the hill billy had been so marked that even those that scoffed the most felt an uneasy sense of possible calamity. It was not at all probable, scarcely conceivable, that Lafe could be elected, yet there was danger, a risk that they must eliminate at once. For even Attorney Duncan, the friend of the gang, the idol of the Smut Listeners Amalgamated Association of Keg Resters, thick-skinned as an alligator, became conscious that the shifting wind of popular approval was blowing dust into his eyes and drifting sand into stumbling ridges across his path to Washington.

Birkins, who had suffered most at the hill billy's hand, assured the gang that the time had come when they must take action. It was inconceivable that

the county should be disgraced by that hill animal being sent to the legislature. Ames said that, while of course young men should be encouraged if they were the right sort, it would certainly give the State a wrong impression of our fair county to send a person like Lafe Jason to Jefferson City. Even were he competent, his lack of experience would bar him. Hilman expressed it more plainly—if more profanely. Alfred Walters agreed it would never do—it must not even be remotely thought of. Every possibility must be removed. And for one he was willing—if they thought it necessary—to take off his coat and wade into the campaign. The rest, being stockholders in the bank, advised Alfred to keep his coat—and shirt—on, and they would think of some other way.

They did, and, a week before election, a printed letter was sent broadcast through the entire country.

VII.

Lafe Jason came in Thursday. When Nina returned to the store from dinner he was sitting on the counter, swinging his heels, a bag of peanuts at his side.

"Are you getting along that well?" She smiled at the significance of the peanuts.

"I think so." Lafe grinned, but his eyes were serious. "Of course, one never can tell. Politics is as uncertain as Sam Griven's promise to work.

"But, Nina"—he turned from the open door and looked straight into her eyes—"I told you I intended to be elected—and I do!"

"I hope so, Lafe." There was more than hope in her tone. She wanted, above everything else, for him to get his heart's desire, and had come to believe it might be possible for him to win.

Lafe spent the rest of the day in the store and was in high spirits. He would start next morning on his final campaign round.

About four o'clock the telephone rang loud and long—as though a long-distance call. Lafe answered it.

"Is this you, Jason?" It was from Sarvis Point. "Have you seen the letters sent out by your Commercial Club?"

"No!" Lafe felt a sudden sense of danger—a feeling that his house of hopes was made of cornstalks, after all. "What is it?"

"I can't tell you over the phone. But get one at once—and do something about it. The time is short."

There were five other calls in thirty minutes. The letters, it seemed, were just reaching their destination.

At five Hardy came rushing to the store, chuffing like an automobile, trying to get to town before the gasoline gives out.

"Have you seen that?" He agitatedly thrust a letter—a printed form—at the hill billy.

The county chairman wanted to tell him at once and at great length just what to do about it, but Lafe dismissed him with a decisive nod.

"Hardy, let me study this over for an hour. I'll call you up after supper." He turned and walked back to his desk, sat down with his back to the storeroom, and spread the letter before him.

He read slowly, carefully, weighing each paragraph as he went. There was more brains in it than he thought the bunch, all combined, had.

It began:

TO THE VOTERS OF WAHOO COUNTY: We, the business men of Wahoo City, feel it a solemn duty to make a statement. Usually local pride prompts the citizens to be loyal to a candidate from their own town, regardless of his qualifications. But we feel so strongly that the election of Lafe Jason of this city as representative would be a calamity to the entire county, that we lay aside

local pride and issue this plain statement to the voters of the county.

Then followed several paragraphs of dubious insinuations like:

This man came to our town three years ago with not fifty dollars. To-day he has over ten thousand dollars in the bank. Do you believe a man without capital or experience can make ten thousand dollars in that time *honestly?*

The next was a plea not to send him because of his manifest unfitness.

Moreover, he is an enemy of our fair county, and a defamer of its worthy citizenry. He has been heard to say: "A woodchopper is like a hen—he works hardest when sitting." He has openly declared "The chief products of Wahoo County are coon dogs, rust, and rest." He makes fun of those worthy tillers of the soil who through every handicap support their families on the small hillside farms; he makes insulting remarks about the methods of farming followed by men who tilled the soil before he was born.

Do you want such a man to represent you in the legislature; to make fun of his own constituents in the halls of our State capitol? Besides, he is known to favor a bill compelling you to send your children to school whether it is convenient or not. If he gets a bill like that passed, you could not take your boys out of school even in corn-cutting time to help with the work without being arrested.

There was another stirring appeal to save the good name of the county by voting, regardless of party, against the defamer of their good name. And the thing was signed "Wahoo City Commercial Club."

There was no Wahoo City Commercial Club, so that signature held nobody responsible, and yet removed from it the stigma of being an anonymous attack.

As he read the letter, Nina Wingate watched him. She saw an almost impalpable change come over him. When he finished he still sat bent over the desk. His shoulders sagged slightly, his head bent a little lower as though tired. A numb ache came into her throat, and a furious anger that almost blinded her surged up against those who had hurt him. She read in his still, almost lifeless, attitude at the desk the death of his hopes at the moment when they seemed nearest.

VIII.

Hardy, all the other county candidates that could be reached, and several other party advisers met that night in the new store.

Throughout the discussion Lafe said little. He sat most of the time as though in the lethargy of deep study. The county chairman did most of the talking. They all recognized the certain defeat that letter meant unless its effect could be counteracted. Those remarks about the woodchoppers and the hill farmers alone would lose him two hundred votes. And he had not a vote to lose. Even he, the most hopeful of them, doubted if the ticket was yet within a hundred votes of election. Any loss would mean total defeat.

Hardy hit the counter hard with his fist.

"Jason," he said, "there is only one thing to do—get out a reply. It is too late for the papers. That's why they waited until Thursday to send that thing out. But you can get out a denial to-night and send it out to-morrow. Make it emphatic—tell the people every line of it is a damning lie, told solely to hurt you."

Lafe shook his head.

"But it is not. The part that really counts is true. I said that about the woodchoppers; and the coon-dog farmers. And, of course, I'll vote for a bill to compel them to send their children to school—if I have a chance. Those are the things that will lose us votes."

"Of course they are," stormed Hardy, "and you have got to deny them. It will be too late for them to prove it, and later you could find some excuse for switching on the compulsory

school business." The candidates, for the most part, joined in this opinion.

But again Lafe shook his head.

"I can't do that, of course." His tone was final. "And any sort of denial will be useless. For it would leave enough unconvinced to beat me. No, fellows, that won't do."

"Then, what will do?" demanded Hardy.

"I don't know," said Jason. "But—I'll do something in the next two days."

That was all he would promise—and of course the chairman and the rest could do nothing more.

IX.

The county chairman came to him the next day to know what reply he had prepared to the attack.

"I've decided," said Lafe at last, "not to make a reply."

And, knowing the last word when he heard it, Hardy went away thoroughly disgruntled. He met the candidate for county clerk in front of the livery stable.

"It's all up, Morris!" Hardy shook his head sorrowfully, like a cow watching her only calf led away for veal. "It's too bad," said the chairman gloomily. "I've nearly worked my head off for that fellow. Believe I could have pulled him through, but now he has laid down on us. I'm afraid he'll lose the whole ticket. Duncan will run about six hundred votes ahead of him."

Lafe remained in the store the rest of the week. Nina was surprised at his abandoning the campaign. The closing days were the most important. Duncan was speaking day and night, and would close Saturday night with a big rally at Wahoo City.

Nina felt dreadfully sorry over it. She hated to see him defeated, but hated worse to see him give up that way. Never before had she seen him cornered so that he could not find a way to get out and fight and fight hard.

Monday morning at ten o'clock came a telephone call from over one of the rural lines. It was from a farmer with whom Lafe had stayed all night on one of his campaign trips.

"Say, Mr. Jason, did you know they are sending out another attack on you? I just got it on this morning's mail. It's awful. I thought I'd tell you, so you'd have time to do something."

The telephone was busy from then until four o'clock. Calls came from all parts of the county telling of the last scandalous attack that had been sent out anonymously, and all of them urged Lafe to make haste with some sort of denial or refutation.

Windy Jim Davis, of Buckeye Bridge, was one of the last to call.

"Say, Jason, this last letter is a fright. They accuse you of everything from stealing hogs to beating your mother. I'd send somebody to the pen over that. It'll sure cook your goose into a crackling if you don't get a hustle on you. They'll beat you, anyway, so everybody says; but I'd try to keep it from being unanimous."

"Got your corn cut, Windy?" was Lafe's only reply, and Windy left the telephone in disgust.

At four Hardy again bore down on the new store like a gasoline road grader. The chairman was that style of politician who keeps his ears so close to the ground he can't hear even the band wagon until it runs over him on the way to the celebration. He had just got hold of one of the letters that had gone out to every voter in the county.

"I guess that'll wake you up!" Hardy slammed a copy of the letter that had just come into his possession on the counter in front of Lafe.

"Hurry, man—for Heaven's sakes, hurry!" fumed Hardy as Lafe leisurely looked over the letter. "If we rush

we can get the printing offices at Sarvis Point and Wahoo City and Buckeye Bridge, so we can get out handbills to almost every voting precinct early in the morning."

Lafe slowly, solemnly shook his head.

Hardy swore. "Why, man, what has got into you? Have you lost your nerve, or didn't you ever have any? That is the worst pack of lies I ever saw handed to a candidate. They accuse you of everything. Even say you were the county treasurer who six years ago stole twenty thousand from the county—and you wasn't hardly out of knee pants then.

"Why—why," sputtered Hardy, "if that attack was on me, I'd go out and shoot up the town!"

Lafe turned his mild blue eyes speculatively upon the furious chairman and studied him with the impersonal air of a scientist trying to discover a drop of shooting blood somewhere in his veins.

"No," the hill billy said, with slow finality, "it is no use, Hardy. No use at all. Let it go. You know the old saying that a lie travels a league while truth is getting his boots on. Any little truth we would get out on posters would stub its toes and bump its nose before it got in sight of that lie. People love to believe a lie, anyway. It sounds so much more reasonable. You only have to hint at a lie to prove it, but it takes ten affidavits and two new trials and three appeals to establish the truth.

"Let it go!"

Hardy did, and he went himself, swearing with great disgust as he went.

When Lafe returned from the post office after the five o'clock mail, Nina Wingate was leaning on the counter reading the anonymous attack which Hardy had left. She turned hastily as Lafe entered, and went toward the back of the store, but he got a glimpse of flushed cheeks, reddened eyes, and small, clenched fists. It was easy to understand that Nina was only two generations removed from her feudist ancestors of Kentucky.

X.

The police never have to be called to clear the walk of the jam made by the friends of a candidate foredoomed to defeat. No one is let more severely alone, unless it be an impeccable spinster, whose wildest dissipations for thirty-eight years has been to read the jokes in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, after she has been caught in the guilty act of helping the married choir leader on with his overcoat.

Lafe Jason went to the polls Tuesday morning and voted. The rest of the day he stayed in the store. The telephone did not ring a half dozen times all day, and not a dozen party workers came in to see him.

The stores all closed at six on election night. The polls closed at that time, and by seven the returns would begin to arrive.

As Lafe returned from supper at half past six already a crowd was gathering in front of Birkins' Big Brick Store, from the platform of which bulletins were to be announced as fast as they came in to the central telephone office upstairs.

Duncan and his friends had employed the band to aid in the celebration of his victory, and already the drummer was out in the streets tapping the call for his fellow noise distributors. There was a light behind the drawn curtains of Duncan's office, and the hill billy guessed the fat lawyer was working into his impromptu speech of thanks the intimation of his great fitness for Congress and his willingness to run for that office two years hence.

When Lafe entered his store he locked the door behind him, pulled the blinds, and drew a chair up by the

telephone. He had arranged with central to give him the returns as they came in.

At a quarter to seven there was a tap, a light, hurried tap. It was Nina Wingate.

"Can't I come in," she asked anxiously, "and take down the returns for you?"

"Yes," he nodded, letting her in and closing the door. He was touched by her loyalty. She wanted to be with him in his hour of defeat. "You get a pencil and paper and take down the vote as I get it over the telephone."

At seven-fifteen there had been no call. Lafe walked to the rear of the store and back several times. He stood beside the telephone receiver and looked idly through the directory. Nina sharpened her pencil twice and fidgeted with the paper. She reached down the counter and picked up a loose newspaper. It uncovered something that gave her a surprise, and she slid the paper back to where it was.

"Lafe"—she turned on the stool by the counter—"you really haven't any hopes of election, have you?"

"Y-e-s," he said uncertainly, "but only hopes."

"I thought," said Nina, making little dots with the sharpened pencil on the edge of the counter, "that you lost all hope when that last attack came out."

"No," he shook his head. "It was the first attack that hit me the hardest. It was clever. I'm wondering yet how they got together brains enough to do it. It sound rather high-minded, and deals in half truths. It is signed 'The Commercial Club'! Most men, you know, hate anonymous letters. There is no Commercial Club, but the voters over the county did not know that. No—it is upon this last attack that I am basing my hopes."

"Your hopes! Why, Lafe Jason, it is ten times worse than the first."

Lafe half smiled. "That's it. It is an overdose. It is like I told Hardy. The truth will get the best of a lie in the long run; but in the meantime your enemy may have been in Congress for years, and you have lost your taste for peanuts. You can't disprove those things in time for an election. But I've hoped this second lie, bigger, lots bigger, and entirely anonymous, would catch up with the first one and fight it to a dog fall.

"You see"—he took a copy of the letter from his pocket and came to Nina's side and spread it on the counter—"there are eight mighty bad charges against me—beating my mother, stealing hogs, suspicion of robbing a bank, and other high crimes. Now some of the voters might believe all of that. But here, the ninth says I was the county treasurer six years ago and robbed the county.

"Do you see?" He looked down at her with a hopeful twinkle as she turned her face up with questioning. "Everybody knows that is a lie. And when Bill Jones of Hickory Fork reads that far, he'll say to Sam Smith: 'Why, dad gum it, I know that's a lie, for I was on the jury that sent Sol Moore to the pen for stealing that money. By heck! this whole thing is a parcel of lies that they've been sending out. I don't like no underhanded business like that nohow.'

"And here"—Lafe pointed to the very last—"there is a truth tacked on to the tail of these fast-running lies."

Nina read it again:

Be sure you defeat Lafe Jason. If you do not, he will vote against a stock law.

"Now that happens to be so," said Lafe. "I will vote against a stock law. We have forty thousand acres of wild land in Wahoo County, and the pasture supports hundreds of sheep and cattle. The counties in the State that are all in cultivation need a stock law—a law compelling all farmers to keep up their stock. They have such a law for their

counties now, and are trying to force it on the whole State. But Wahoo County farmers would almost go to war over such a law."

Nina's eyes had opened wide and her lips parted for a question.

"But, Lafe——"

The telephone rang. Lafe took down the receiver hurriedly. His hand shook a little as he held it to his ear.

"Benton Township? All right, go ahead." Turning to Nina with anxiously poised pencil: "Duncan, 48; Jason, 41."

"That is not so bad," he said to Nina as he hung up the receiver. But from up street came a loud shout and the sudden blare of the first tune from the band. Duncan's gang—or rather, Birkins', Ames', and Hilman's gang—was going to begin early and yell late.

Again the ring of the telephone. Lafe took down the receiver.

"Oak Grove—all right. Duncan, 52; Jason, 64. What was that last vote? Repeat it—sixty-four, you say? All right."

Lafe turned to Nina and shook his head. "That is not so good as the other. We usually carry the township by twenty or thirty."

The other townships came in every ten or fifteen minutes. The rural townships came first, because the vote being small the count was soon over.

At half past nine eleven of the fifteen were in, and Nina, adding the votes, found Duncan fifty ahead. The band in front of the Big Brick Store was bleating away on some festive tune like the Dead March of Saul, and the crowd was intermittently yelling: "Duncan! Duncan! He's all right!"

Then came Wellsville, the biggest township outside of the towns.

"Duncan, 112; Jason, 160."

Nina's eyes danced and her heart began pounding again.

"Maybe we are not beat yet."

Then came Sarvis Point, giving Lafe thirty-four majority, and Nina jumped up and clapped her hands.

"Not yet!" warned Lafe. He looked graver than he had all evening. "Wahoo City is the danger—I know it is for Duncan—and it may go strong."

Five minutes later the Wahoo City count was finished. The telephone zizzed, but before Lafe got to it the band broke out amid a raucous roar of shouts up street, and that vacant, sickening sense of falling was at the pit of his stomach.

"Duncan," he read off mechanically to Nina, "284; Jason, 171."

"That settles me!" Lafe dropped the receiver in place. His hand shook a little, his lips were set hard, but there was a touching wistfulness in his face—like a boy whose whole heart had been set on something which he had to give up.

Everything was in but Buckeye Bridge. Lafe had hoped for a pretty good vote there, but to overcome Duncan's lead was out of question.

The telephone zip-zizzed. Lafe jumped and took down the receiver with fearful deliberateness. Nina held her breath, the poised pencil trembling in her hand.

"Duncan"—Lafe's voice for the first time shook a little—"161—what—what?" Lafe grabbed the crank and rang hard. The connection was broken. He listened and no sound came. He rang again violently. His heart was thumping, the blood pounded in his face. Still the connection was broken.

Then suddenly from up street the band bellowed and thumped forth again—and Lafe's arm dropped to his side. He turned away from the phone. Nina hurriedly blotted from the sheet of paper the marks of a splashing tear. They both knew what the triumphant blast from the band meant.

Then it stopped. The band quit in the middle of the bar—like they were listening.

"Zip-ziz," went the telephone in a wheezy, undertone ring. Lafe had down the receiver in an instant.

"Yes—yes, this is Jason. Buckeye Bridge—all right—go ahead.

"Duncan, 161; Jason, 280."

Lafe turned and his eyes met Nina's. She was very flushed and the light of victory and congratulation danced in her eyes.

"Lafe," she said, "I started to ask a good while ago—did you send that last letter?"

"Sure!" he smiled. "Please hand me that bag of peanuts under the paper."

"They are coming!" Nina sprang up. The crowd was within two hundred feet of the store.

He nodded thoughtfully, his eyes full of boyish humor and delight.

"Do you think Washington would be a nice place to live—in about four years?"

The blare of the band drowned the answer. But the Sunday papers say Nina does.

THE FATAL VOTES

WHEN the House of Representatives voted on the administration measure for the repeal of the law exempting American coastwise shipping from paying tolls for the use of the Panama Canal, many of the statesmen could not decide which was the popular side of the question. They tried to figure which way to vote, but they were at sea when it came to sizing up just how their action would appeal to the country.

The day after the vote was taken, a man from a Western State told a member of the cabinet:

"Well, I voted for the administration bill yesterday, and when I did it I dug my political grave."

The cabinet official's next visitor was a congressman whose district adjoined that of the other visitor.

"Mr. Secretary," said the second member, "I confess that I dug my political grave yesterday."

"You voted for the administration bill?" suggested the member of the cabinet.

"No," replied the congressman. "I voted against it."

NEW ANGLES ON ANCESTRY

THERE remain to this day in the South certain sections where ancestry, "family," and birth are regarded as sacred institutions. There the pedigree is the big thing, and, if you have no "family," you don't belong.

Into one of these communities drifted a Westerner with a lot of money. When he first arrived, he was not thoroughly posted on the rules regarding "blue blood" and "poor white trash." After a few weeks, however, these things were borne in upon him with considerable force, and in the course of time there blossomed on one of the walls of his library a full-fledged family tree. When it came to ancestry, the stranger was fully equipped.

This development was being discussed one afternoon on the veranda of the country club, when a noble old Southern gentleman remarked:

"When you have enough money, ancestry is like the taste for liquor. It can be either inherited or cultivated."

Fortune's Football

By B. M. Bower

Author of "Flying U Ranch," "The Gringos," Etc.

(*A Four-Part Story—Part Four.*)

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE HOOKIN' COUGH MAN.

BILLY LOUISE waited another minute or two, weighing the possibilities. She saw Ward's fingers drop away from the gun, but they remained close enough for a dangerously quick gripping of it again if the whim seized him. Still—surely to goodness Ward would never get crazy enough to hurt *her!* Perhaps her feminine assurance of her hold on him, more than her courage, kept her nerves fairly steady. She bit the pencil absently, watching him.

Ward turned his head restlessly on the pillow and coughed again. Billy Louise got up quietly, went close to the bed, and laid her hand on his forehead. His head was hot and the veins were swollen and throbbing on his temples.

"Brave buckaroo got a headache?" she queried softly, stroking his temples soothingly. "Got the hookin' cough, too. Got every measly thing he can think of. Even got a grouch against the Flower of the Ranch-oh!" Her voice was crooningly soft and sweet, as if she were murmuring over a sleepy baby.

Ward closed his eyes, opened them and looked up into her face. One hand came up uncertainly and caught her fingers closely. "Wilhelmina-mine!" he said, in his hoarse voice. His eyes cleared to sanity under her touch.

Billy Louise drew a small sigh of relief and reached down unobtrusively with her free hand for the gun. She slid it down away from his fingers, and when he still paid no attention she picked it up quite openly and laid it against the footboard. Ward did not say anything. He seemed altogether occupied with the amazing reality of her presence. He clung to her fingers and looked at her with that intent stare of his, as if he were trying to hold her there by the sheer power of his will.

"Well, how am I going to doctor you and feed you and make you all comfy, with one hand?" asked Billy Louise with quavering flippancy.

"Kiss me!"

"Ah—might catch the hookin' cough," bantered Billy Louise, leaning a bit closer.

"Kiss me!"

"Oh, well—I s'pose sick folks have to be humored." Billy Louise leaned closer still. "Mighty few kissy places left," she observed, with the same shaky flippancy a minute later. "Say, Ward, you look for all the world like old Sour Dough Williams!" (Sour Dough Williams, it may be remarked, was a particularly hairy and unkempt individual who lived a more or less nomadic life in the hills, trapping.)

"You look like——" Ward groped for a simile. "Angel" was altogether too commonplace.

"Like the lady who's going to get

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busy right now, making you well. What *have* you been doing to yourself? Never mind—I don't want you talking yourself crazy again. Do you know you tried to shoot me up when I came in? And you made me start in to write a record of my sins. But that's all right—seeing you've got the hookin' cough I'll forgive you this once. Lie still—and let go my hand. I want to put a wet cloth on your head."

"Did I——"

"You did; and then some. Forget it. You've got a horrible cold—and from the looks of things you've had it for about six months." Her eyes went comprehensively about that end of the cabin with the depleted cracker box, the half-emptied boxes of peaches and tomatoes, and the buckets that were all but empty of water. She was shocked at the pitiful evidence of long helplessness. She did not quite understand. Surely Ward's cold had not kept him in bed so long.

"Well, this is no time for mirth or laughter," she said briskly to hide how close she was to hysteria, "since it looks very much like 'the morning after.' First we've got to tackle that fever of yours." She picked up a water pail and started for the door. As she passed the foot of the bunk she confiscated the two revolvers and took them outside with her. She had no desire to be mistaken again for Buck Olney.

When she came back Ward's eyes were wild again, and he started up in bed and glared at her. Billy Louise laughed at him and told him to lie down like a nice buckaroo, and Ward, recalled to himself by her voice, obeyed. She got the washbasin and a towel, and prepared to bathe his head. He wanted a drink. And when she held a cup to his lips and saw how greedily he drank, a little sob broke unexpectedly from her lips. She gritted her teeth after it and forced a laugh.

"You're sure a hard drinker," she bantered, and wet her handkerchief to lay on his brow.

"That's the first decent drink I've had for a month," he told her, dropping back to the pillow, refreshed to the point of clear thinking. "Old lady fortune's still playing football with me, William. I've been laid up with a broken leg for about six weeks, and when I got gay and thought I could handle myself again, I put myself out of business for a while and caught this cold before I came to and crawled back into bed. I'm—sure glad you showed up, old girl. I was—getting up against it for fair." He coughed.

"Looks like it." Billy Louise held herself rigidly back from any emotional expression. She could not afford to "go to pieces" now. She tried to think just what a trained nurse would do in such a case. Her hospital experience would be of some use here, she told herself. She remembered reading somewhere that no experience is valueless if one only applies the knowledge gained.

"First," she said cheerfully, "the patient must be kept quiet and cheerful. So don't go jumping up and down on your broken leg, Ward Warren—the nurse forbids it. And smile—if it kills you."

Ward grinned appreciatively. Sick as he was, he realized the gameness of Billy Louise; what he failed to realize was the gameness of himself. "I'm a pretty worthless specimen right now," he said apologetically. "But I'm yours to command, Bill, the Conk. You're the doctor."

"Nope—I'm the cook right now. I've got a hunch. How would you like a cup of tea, patient?"

"I'd rather have coffee—Doctor William."

"Tea, you mean. I'll have it ready in ten minutes." Then she weakened before his imploring eyes. "You really oughtn't to drink coffee with that fever,

Ward. But—maybe if I don't make it very strong and put in lots of cream—— We'll take a chance, buckaroo!"

Ward watched her as intently as if his life depended on her speed. He had lain in that bunk for nearly six weeks with the coffeepot sitting in plain sight on the back of the stove, twelve feet or so from his reach, and with the can of coffee standing in plain sight on the rough board shelf against the wall by the window. And he had craved coffee almost as badly as a drunkard craves whisky.

The sound of the fire snapping in the stove was like music to him. Later, the smell of the coffee coming briskly to the boiling point made his mouth water with desire. And when Billy Louise jabbed two little slits in a cream can with the point of a butcher knife, and poured a thin stream of canned milk into a big, white, granite cup, Ward's eyes turned traitor to his love of the girl and dwelt hungrily upon the swift movements of her hands.

"How much sugar, patient?" Billy Louise turned toward him with the tomato-can sugar bowl in her hands.

"None. I want to taste the coffee this trip."

"Oh, all right. It's the worst thing you could think of—but that's the way with a patient. Patients always want what they mustn't have."

"Sure—get it, too." Ward spoke between long, satisfying gulps. "How's your other patient, Wilhelmina? How's mommie?"

"Oh, Ward! She's dead—mommie's *dead!*" Billy Louise broke down unexpectedly and completely. She went down on her knees beside the bed and cried as she had not cried since she looked the last time at mommie's still face held in that terrifying calm. She cried until Ward's excited mutterings warned her that she must pull herself together. She did somehow, in spite of her sorrow and her worry and that day's succession of emotional shocks. She did it because Ward was sick—very sick, she feared—and there was so much that she must do for him.

"You be s-still!" she commanded brokenly, fighting for her former safe cheerfulness. "I'm all right. Pity yourself if you've got to pity somebody. I—can stand—my trouble. I haven't got any broken leg and—hookin' cough." She managed to laugh then, and took Ward's hand from her hair and laid it down on the blankets. "Now we won't talk about things any more. You've got to have something done for that cold on your lungs." She rose and stood looking down at him with puckered eyebrows.

"Mommie would say you ought to have a good sweat," she decided. "Got any ginger?"

"I dunno. I guess not." Ward muttered confusedly.

"Well, I'll go out and find some sage, then, and give you sage tea. That's another cure-all. Say, Ward, I saw Rattler down the creek. He's looking fine and dandy. He came whinnering down out of that draw to meet us; just tickled to death to see somebody."

"Don't blame him," croaked Ward. "It's enough to tickle anybody." Her voice seemed to steady his straying fancies. "How're—the cattle—looking?"

"Just fine!" lied Billy Louise. "You're the skinniest thing I've seen on the ranch. Now do you think you can keep your senses while I go and pick some nice, good meddy off a sagebush?"

"I guess so." Ward spoke drowsily. "Give me some more coffee and I can."

"Oh, you're the pesteringest patient! I told you coffee isn't good for what ails you—but I suppose——" She poured him another cup of coffee, weakened it with hot water, and let him drink it straight. After all, per-

haps the hot drink would induce the perspiration that would break the fever. She pulled up the wolfskins and the extra blankets he had tossed aside in his feverish restlessness, and covered him to his chin.

"If you don't move till I come back," she promised, "I'll maybe give you another cup—after you've filled up on sage tea." With that qualified hope to cheer him she left him.

She did not spend all her time picking sage twigs. A bush grew at the corner of the cabin within easy reach. She went first down to the stable and led Blue inside and unsaddled him. Rattler was standing near, and she tried to lead him in also, but he fled from her approach. She found the pitchfork and managed to scratch a few forkfuls of hay down from a corner of the stack; enough to fill a manger for Blue and to leave a little heap beside the stable for Rattler.

When she was leaving the stable to return to the house, however, she changed her plan a little and went back and carried the small pile of hay into the stable and filled another manger. Then she took down the wire gate of the hay corral and laid it flat alongside the fence. Rattler would go in to the stack, and she would shut him in. That would simplify the catching of him when he was needed. She would find something with which to carry water to him, if he was too frisky to lead to the creek. Billy Louise was no coward with horses, but she recognized certain fixed limitations in the management of a snuffy brute like Rattler. He was not like Blue, whom she could bully and tease and coax. Rattler was distinctly a man's saddle horse. Billy Louise had never done more than pat his shoulder after he was caught and saddled, and therefore prepared for handling. She foresaw some perturbation of spirit in regard to Rattler.

Ward was lying quiet when she went in, except that he was waving her handkerchief to and fro by the corners to cool it. Billy Louise took it from him, wet it again with cold water, and scolded him for getting his arms from under the covers. That, she said, was no nice way for a hookin'-cough man to do.

Ward meekly submitted to being covered to his eyes. Then he wriggled his chin free and demanded that she kiss him. Ward was fairly drunk with happiness because she was there in the cabin. The dreary weeks behind him were a nightmare to be forgotten. His Wilhelmina-mine was there, and she liked him to pieces. Though she had not affirmed it with words, her eyes when she looked at him told him so —and she had kissed him when he asked her to. He wanted her to repeat the ecstasy.

"Ward Warren, you're a perfectly awful hookin'-cough man! There! Now that's going to be the very last one—oh, Ward, it isn't!" She knelt and curved an arm around his face and kissed him again and yet again. "I do love you, Ward! I've been a weak-kneed, horrid thing, and I'm ashamed to the middle of my bones. You're my own brave buckaroo always—always! You've done what no other man would do, and you don't whine about it; and I've been weak and—horrid; and I'll have to love you about a million years before I can quit feeling ashamed." She kissed him again with a passion of remorse for her doubts of him.

"Are you through being pals, Wilhelmina?" Ward broke rules and freed an arm so that he could hold her closer.

"No—I'm just beginning. Just beginning *right*. I'm your pal for keeps. But——"

"I love you for keeps, lady mine." Ward stifled another cough. "When are you going to—marry me?"

"Oh—when you get over the hookin' cough, I s'pose." Once more Billy

Louise, for the good of her patient, forced herself into safe flippancy—that was not flippant at all, but merely a tender pretension.

"Now it's up to you to show me whether you are in any hurry at all to get well," she said. "Keep your hands covered while I make some tea. That fever of yours has got to be stopped immediately—to once."

She went over and busied herself about the stove, never once looking toward the bed. She was terribly worried about Ward; so worried that she put everything else into the background of her mind and set herself sternly to the need of breaking the fever and lightening the evident congestion in his lungs.

She hunted through the cupboards and found a bottle of turpentine sirupy and yellowed with age, but pungent with strength. She found some lard in a small bucket, and melted half a teacupful. Then she tore up a woolen undershirt she found hanging on a nail, and bore relentlessly down upon him.

"You gotta be greased all over your lungs," she announced with a matter-of-factness that cost her something, for Billy Louise's innate modesty was only just topped by her good sense.

Ward submitted without protest while she bared his chest and applied the warm mixture with a smoothly vigorous palm. "That'll fix the hookin' cough," she said as she spread the warm layers of woolen cloth smoothly from shoulder to shoulder. "How does it feel?"

"Great!" he assured her succinctly.

"Will your game leg let you turn over—because there's some dope left and it ought to go between your shoulders?"

"The game leg ought to stand more than that," he told her, turning slowly. "If I hadn't got this cold tacked on to me, I'd have been trying to walk on it by now."

"Better give it time—since you've been game enough to lie here all this while and take care of it. I don't believe I'd have had nerve enough for that, Ward." She poured turpentine and lard into her palm, reached inside his collar, and rubbed it on his shoulders. "Good thing you had plenty of grub handy. But it must have been awful!"

"It was pretty lonesome," he admitted, and that was as far as his complainings went.

Billy Louise then poured the water off the sage leaves she had been brewing in a tin basin, carefully fished out a stem or two, and made Ward drink every bitter drop. Then she covered him to the eyes, and hardened her heart against his discomfort while she kept the handkerchief cool on his head and between times swept the floor with a carefully dampened broom and wiped the dust off things and restored the room to its most cheerful atmosphere of livableness.

"Wan'a drink," mumbled Ward with a blanket over his mouth and a raveled thread tickling his nose so that he squirmed.

Billy Louise went over and laid her fingers on his neck. "I can't tell whether it's grease or perspiration," she said, laughing a little. "What are you squinting up your nose for? Surely to goodness you don't mind that little, harmless raveling? If you wouldn't go on breathing it wouldn't wiggle around so much!" Nevertheless she plucked the tormenting thread and threw it on the floor.

"Gimme—drink," Ward mumbled again.

"There's more sage tea——"

"Waugh!"

"I suppose that means you aren't crazy about sage tea! Well, I might give you a teenty-weenty speck more of coffee. You can't have water yet, you know. You've—you've got to sweat like a nigger in a cotton patch first."

Ward grunted something, and afterward signified that he would take the coffee and call it square.

The next time she went near him he was wrinkling his lean nose because beads of perspiration were standing there and slipping occasionally down to his cheeks.

"Fine! You're two niggers in a cotton patch now," she announced cheeringly. "And Mr. Hookin' Cough will have to hunt another home, I reckon. You weren't half as hoarse when you swore that last time."

It was physically impossible for Ward to blush, since he was already the color of a boiled beet; but he looked guilty when she uncovered the rest of his face and wiped off the gathered moisture. "I didn't think you'd hear," he grinned embarrassedly.

"I was listening for it, buckaroo. I'd have been scared to pieces if you hadn't cussed a little. I'd have thought sure you were going to die. A man," she added sententiously, "always has a chance as long as he's able to swear. It's like a horse wiggling his ears."

The comparison reminded her that she intended to shut Rattler in the hay corral. She dried Ward's hands hastily, pulled the wolfskins off the bed, and commanded him to keep covered until she came back. She ran down bareheaded to the stable, saw Rattler industriously boring his nose into the stack, and put up the gate.

When she went into the cabin again, Ward gave a start and opened his eyes like one who has been dozing. Billy Louise smiled gratifiedly. He was better. She knew he was better. She did not speak, but went over to the stove and pretended to be busy there, though she was careful to make no noise. When she turned finally and glanced toward the bed, Ward was asleep.

Billy Louise took a deep breath, tiptoed over to the bench beside the table, sat down, and pillowed her head on her folded arms. She wanted to cry, and she needed to think, and she was deadly, deadly tired.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE WOLF JOKE.

Billy Louise stayed all night. She was afraid to leave Ward until his cold was safely better, and there was no one living near enough to summon; no one whom she wanted to summon, in fact, however close he might have been. She spent most of the night curled comfortably on the wolfskins beside the stove, with a sack of flour for a pillow and Ward's fur coat for covering. Ward slept less brokenly than he had done for a long time, while Billy Louise lay cuddled under the smelly fur and thought and thought.

In the morning, if Ward were well enough, she meant to ask him about those cattle he had mentioned when he thought her Buck Olney. They were the same ones which she had seen in the Cove, she knew. Ward had told enough to prove that. He had, in fact, told nearly all she needed to know—except the mystery of his prosperity. He had not mentioned that, and Billy Louise was more curious than ever about his "wolf hunting."

At sunrise she rebuilt the fire and made fresh coffee and a stew from the pieces of jerky she had soaked overnight for the purpose. She wanted eggs, and bread for toast, and fresh cream; but she did not have them, and so she managed a very creditable breakfast for her patient without the desirables.

"Say, that's great! A fellow doesn't appreciate coffee and warm food until he's eaten out of cans and boxes for a month or so. You're a great little lady, Wilhelmina. I wish you'd happened along sooner—about six weeks sooner. I'd have got some pleasure out of my broken leg then maybe."

"Was it—did Buck Olney break it?" Billy Louise knew he had not, but she had been waiting for a chance to open the subject.

"No. I broke it myself, pulling Rattler off a bank into some rocks. I believe I could walk on it, doctor, if you could rustle me something to use for crutches. That's what held me in bed so long. Reckon you could manufacture a pair for me?" His eyes made love. "You've done everything else." He caught her hand and kissed the palm of it. "Can't the Billy part turn carpenter?"

"I'll see. Say, Ward, do you think you could shave off those whiskers if I got everything ready for you? I don't like you to look like old Sour Dough. Or maybe I could do it. I—I used to shave daddy's neck sometimes."

Ward ran his fingers thoughtfully over his hairy cheeks. "I expect I do look like a prehistoric ancestor. I'll see what I can do about it. I set my own leg—I guess I can shave myself. You're a great doctor, Wilhelmina. You knocked that cold up to a peak, all right. But—I don't believe you'd better tackle barbering, my dear girl."

Billy Louise pouted her lips at him. She could afford to pout now; Ward was so like himself that she did not worry over him at all. She also felt that she could afford to badger him into telling her some of the things she wanted to know.

"Where did you hang Buck?" she asked naïvely.

"Hunh?" Ward's eyes bored into hers with his intent look, trying to read her thoughts.

"Where was it you hanged Buck Olney?"

"Nowhere. I put the fear of the Lord into him is all. How did you hear about it?"

"From you." Billy Louise was maddeningly calm. "You told me all about it yesterday. And about those cattle in the corral up here. I found them yesterday myself, Ward—only it seems a month ago!—down in the Cove."

"Did you?"

"Yes, and I drove them up to the corral and read the riot act to Marthy and Charlie Fox——"

"Hunh! What did they say?"

"Oh, they denied it, of course. What are we going to do about it, Ward?"

"Nothing, I guess. What did you want to do?"

"I don't know. I don't want to hurt them—and I don't want them to hurt any one else. Do you know Seabeck? He's an awfully square old fellow. I believe——" An idea formed vaguely in the back of Billy Louise's mind. "I believe I could persuade him——"

"I believe you could persuade the devil himself if you took a notion to try," Ward affirmed sincerely when she hesitated. "What do you want to persuade him into?"

"Oh, nothing, I guess. How do you feel, Ward? We've got to stick to the job of getting you fit to leave here and go on down to the ranch with me. When do you think you could manage to ride?"

Ward looked longingly out of the window, just as he had been looking for six weeks. "I think I could manage it now," he said doggedly because of his great longing. "I set my own leg——"

"Yes, and I'm willing to admit you're a wonder, and have gotten the stoics beaten at their own game. Still, there's a limit to what the human body will stand. I'm going down to tend the horses, and if you think you can walk without hurting your leg, I'll hunt some forked sticks for crutches. We'll see how you make out with them first, before we talk about riding twenty miles on horseback. Besides, you'd catch more cold if you went out to-day."

While she talked her plans took definite shape in the back of her mind. She

took Buck Olney's knife that was lying on the window sill, and went in search of crutches among the willows along the creek. Forked sticks were plentiful enough, but it was not so easy to find two that would support even so skinny a man as Ward. She compromised by cutting four that seemed suitable and binding them together in couples.

When she went in with her makeshifts, Ward was sitting upon the side of the bunk, clothed, and in his right mind—but pitifully wabbly and much ashamed of his weakness.

"You shouldn't have tried to get up yet," she scolded. "Do you want to be worse so I'll have to cure you all over again?" Then, womanlike, she proceeded to annul the effect by petting and sympathy.

It was while she was sitting in the one chair, padding the sticks crudely enough, but effectively, that Ward, gazing at her with the light of love in his eyes, thought of something he had meant to tell her.

"Oh, by the way, I've got something for you, Wilhelmina," he said. "Put down that thing and come over here. I want to shave before I take a try at walking, anyway. See here, lady mine, how would you like these strung on a gold chain?"

From under his pillow he drew out a tobacco sack and emptied the contents into her palm. "Those are your Christmas presents, Bill-Loo. Like 'em?"

"*Do* I!" Billy Louise held up the biggest one, and stared at it, round-eyed. "Gold nuggets! Where in the world did——"

"That's what I'm going to tell you —now you're through being just pals. Oh, I'd have told you, anyway, I reckon —only the play never came right, after that first little squabble we had over it." He put an arm around her and pulled her down beside him. "That's the wolf joke, William. I did make a lot of money wolfing—on the square. I dug out a den of pups and struck a little pocket of pretty rich gravel. I've been panning it out all the time I could spare till the creek froze up."

"You found a gold mine?" Billy Louise gasped. "Why, whoever would have thought——"

"Oh, I wouldn't call it a gold mine exactly," he hastened to assure her before her imagination dazzled her. "There isn't enough of it. It's just a pocket. I've cleaned up about eighteen hundred dollars this summer besides these nuggets. Maybe more. And there's some left yet. I found both ends of the streak—it lies along a ledge on the side of a gully. I couldn't find anything except in that one streak of gravel; and when that's gone she's done, as near as I can figure. But it isn't all gone yet, lady mine. There's enough left to pay the preacher, anyway. That big fellow I found along toward the last, just before I quit working." He kissed her gravely. "Poor old girl—she's dead game, all right, and she's kind of had the cards stacked against her from the start. But things are going to come easier from now on, if I'm any prophet. It's too bad——"

Billy Louise read his thought.

"Mommie looked so *peaceful,* Ward. At the last, I mean. If I could have waked her up, I don't believe I'd have had the heart to do it. She never was very happy—you know that. She couldn't seem to see the happiness in little things. So many are like that. And she looked happier—at the last—than I ever saw her look before. So —I'm happier, too—since yesterday."

"Are you?" Ward dropped his face against her hair and held it there for a minute. It was not his cold altogether that had made his voice break hoarsely over those two words.

"Do you know"—Billy Louise was lifting the nuggets one after the other and letting them drop to her lap—"hap-

piness is like gold, Ward. We've got to pan it out of life. If we try to steal it from some one else, we pay the penalty, don't you think? And so many go looking and looking for great big chunks of it all—all—whatever they do to it." She laughed a little at her ignorance of the technical process. "You see what I mean, don't you? We get a streak of gravel—that's life. And we can pan out happiness if we try—little nuggets and sometimes just colors—but it keeps us hoping and working."

"Doctor of philosophy!" Ward kissed her hair. "You're a great little girl, all right. And I'm the buckaroo that has struck a mighty rich streak of pay dirt in life. I'm panning out happiness millions to the pan right now."

Billy Louise, attacked with a spasm of shyness, went abruptly to padding the makeshift crutches, and changed the subject.

"I'm going home, soon as I fix you comfy," she said.

Whereupon Ward protested most strenuously and did not look in the least like a man who has just announced himself a millionaire in happiness.

"What for?" he demanded, after he had exhausted himself to no purpose in telling her that she should not leave the cabin until he could go along.

"I want eggs—for you, you ungrateful beast. And some bread for toast. And I want to tell Phœbe and John where I am——"

"You think those Injuns are going to hurt themselves worrying? I don't want any eggs and toast. I've managed all right on crackers and jerky for six weeks, so I guess I can stand it a few hours longer. Still, if you're crazy to go——" He dropped back on the pillow and turned his face away.

Billy Louise worked silently until she had made the crutches as soft on top as she could. Then she hunted for Ward's razor and shaving cup, and, after one or two failures, through using too much water, she managed to make a cup of very nice lather.

"Now, buckaroo, don't be a sulky kid," she said firmly as she could. "You know it's hard enough for me to go off and leave you here like this. But, as you say, you've managed for six weeks without me, so——"

"Sure. I could do it again, I reckon." Ward turned a gloomy pair of eyes upon her. "What's the rush? Do you think it isn't proper——"

"It's always proper to do what is right and helpful and kind," said Billy Louise with dignity—because she had made up her mind and was trying not to weaken. "I've lived in this country all my life, and I guess my reputation will stand this little strain," she went on lightly, "even if any one finds it out. I've got to go, that's all. Those people in the Cove——" It was eloquent of her stern justice that she could not bring herself to speak them by name.

"You aren't going to turn them over to the sheriff, are you, William? Good Lord, girl! If I can——"

"Your lather is getting cold," Billy Louise said evenly. "I ought to have known better than mention the subject at all. I'm going to do what's right. I believe I have some faint idea of right and wrong, Ward Warren. And I'm not going to do anything that I don't feel is right, or that I'll be sorry for. You might trust me, I think. It's early yet——"

"You'll come back before night, won't you?" From his tone, Ward had yielded the point—and was minded to yield with what graciousness he could command. It had occurred to him that he was behaving like a selfish booby. Billy Louise should not call him weak-kneed whatever happened.

"No, I don't think I can, Ward. I might send John——"

"You needn't bother. I don't want John."

"Well, I don't suppose he would be

much comfort. I'll make a pot of coffee, Ward, and I'll fill the lantern and fix it so you can heat a cup when you want to. How will that be?" She brightened a little at the idea. "And I'll fix your lungs up again before I go, and bake some nice, hot biscuits and put here, and butter, and fix you just as comfy as possible. Or if you can manage to get around with the crutches, all the better. I'll leave things so you can manage without going outside for a thing. And, Ward"—she bent over him anxiously—"I'm going because I must. For all our sakes I must go right away. And I'll come back to-morrow just as early as I can get here. So if you are real good, and take care of your cold and get a little strong about walking, you can go back with me. And to-morrow night you can sit in daddy's chair before the fireplace, and we'll have chicken and——"

"All right—all right!" Ward laughed suddenly. "Will you give me a lump of sugar and let me look at all the pitty-pittys in the album? Oh, you William the Conqueror!" He caught her close when he saw that he had hurt her feelings a little, and held her a minute. "When I get two good legs under me," he promised softly, "I'm going to stake myself to the job of taking care of *you*. Your cheeks are pretty thin, lady girl."

"Here's the lather. I'm going down and saddle up," said Billy Louise. "When I come back we'll see how the crutches work."

"Oh, say!" Ward called after her. "My saddle's behind a buck bush up along the trail where the bank is cut straight. I forgot about that. And would you mind bringing the looking-glass, William? How the deuce do you think a man's going to shave without a glass? And that old paper to wipe the lather on, while you're at it. I see the Billy of you hasn't got to the shaving point yet, at any rate!"

Billy Louise took down the glass and flung it on the bed, threw the newspaper after it, and departed with her chin in the air to find his saddle and bridle and carry them to the stable.

Ward, sitting up in bed, stared at the closed door remorsefully. When he was convinced that she did not intend to return even for the last word which is so tempting to a woman, he reached for the glass, held it up, and looked within.

"Sufferin' saddle blankets!" he grunted, and dropped the glass. "And she could kiss a mug like that!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"HM-MM!"

Floyd Carson was a somewhat phlegmatic young man, but he swore an astonished oath when he saw Billy Louise galloping along the lane that led nowhere except to the womanless abode of Samuel Seabeck. He walked very fast to the stable, which was the first logical stopping place, and so he met Billy Louise before she had time to dismount—even supposing she intended to do so.

"Hello, Floyd! Is Mr. Seabeck at home?" Billy Louise was not one to waste time in the superfluities of speech when she had anything on her mind.

"Sure. Get off and I'll put up your horse. We're just through eatin', but our grub carpenter will rustle something for yuh, all right."

"No, I can't stop this time. I'm not hungry, anyway. Just give a yell for Mr. Seabeck, will you? I want to see him a minute."

Floyd eyed her uncertainly, decided that Billy Louise was not in the mood to yield to persuasion, and tactfully hurried off to find Seabeck without shouting for him—lest he bring others also, who were evidently not wanted at all. He took it that Billy Louise felt

some diffidence about visiting a strictly bachelor outfit, and he set himself to relieve her of any embarrassment.

Presently Seabeck himself came from the dirt-roofed, rambling cabin which was his home, and strode down the path, buttoning his coat as he came. Floyd's face showed for a minute in the doorway before he effaced himself completely, and not another man was in sight anywhere. Billy Louise was grateful to circumstance; she had dreaded this visit, though not for the reason Floyd Carson believed.

"How-de-do, Miss MacDonald? Pretty nice day, but I'm afraid it's a weather breeder. The wind's trying to change, I notice."

"Yes—and so I mustn't stop. Could you ride part way home with me, Mr. Seabeck? I—want to talk with you about something. And I can't stop a minute. I must get home."

"Why, certainly, I'll go. If you'll wait just a minute while I saddle up; or, if you'd rather ride on, I'll overtake you."

"I'll ride on, I think. Blue hates standing around, and he's a little warm, too. You're awfully good, Mr. Seabeck."

"Oh, not at all!" Seabeck stubbed his toe on the stable doorsill in his confusion at the praise. "I'll be right along, soon as I can slap a saddle on." He disappeared, and Billy Louise turned and loped slowly down the lane.

So far, so good. Billy Louise tried to believe that it was all going to be as plain sailing as this fortuitous beginning, but she was aware of a nervous fluttering in her throat while she waited, and she knew that she positively dreaded hearing Seabeck gallop up behind her on the frozen trail. "Why *will* people do things that make a lot of trouble for others?" she cried out petulantly. And then she heard the steady *pluck, pluckety-pluck* of Seabeck's horse, and twisted her lips with a whimsical acceptance of the part she had set herself to play. She might smash things, she told herself, but at the worst it would be only a premature smash. "Come, Bill," she adjured herself, pretending it was what Ward would have said had he looked into her mind. "Be a Bill, the Conk—and a good one! Shove in your chips and play for all there is in it."

"You must have some lightning method of saddling, Mr. Seabeck," she smiled over her shoulder at him when he came up.

"We learn to do things quick when we've handled cattle a few years," he admitted. He had a diffident manner of receiving compliments which pleased Billy Louise and gave her confidence a needed brace. She was not a skilled coquette—she was too honest and too straightforward for that; still, nature places certain weapons in the hands of a woman, and instinct shows her how to use them. Seabeck, from his very unaccustomedness to women, seemed to her particularly pliable. Billy Louise took her courage in both hands and went straight to the point.

"Mr. Seabeck, I've always heard that you're an awfully square man," she said. "Daddy seemed to think that you could be depended on in any kind of a pinch. I hope it's true. I'm banking a lot on your squareness to-day."

"Why, I don't know about my being any better than my neighbors," he said, with a twinkle of humor in his eyes, which were a bright, unvarying blue. "But you can bank on my doing anything I can for you, Miss MacDonald. I think I could be even better than *square*—to help a plucky little girl who——"

"I don't mean just the ordinary squareness," Billy Louise put in quietly. "I mean bigness, too; a bigness that will make a man be more than square; a bigness that will let him see all around

a thing and judge it from a bigger viewpoint than mere justice——"

"Hm-mm—if you could trust me enough to——"

"I'm going to, Mr. Seabeck. I'm going to take it for granted you're bigger than your own squareness. And if you're not—if you're just a selfish, weak, letter-perfect, honest man, I'll—feel like—thrashing you." Without a doubt that was the Billy of her which spoke.

"I'll take the thrashing if you think I need it," he promised, looking at her with something more than admiration. "What have you done, Miss MacDonald? If I can help you hide the body——"

"There!" Billy Louise dared to wrinkle her nose at him—and I don't know which of her did it. "I knew you'd play up like a good sport. But what if it isn't a *body?* What if—what if you found some of your cattle with—with a big D—run over your brand?" She had a perfectly white line around her mouth and nostrils then, but she faced him squarely.

"Hm-mm!" Seabeck gave her a quick, sidewise glance, and pulled thoughtfully at the graying whiskers that pointed his chin. "I would have been glad to lend you money, or help you in any way——"

"Yes, I know." Billy Louise snapped her reins impatiently. "But what would you do about the—cattle?"

"What *could* I do? What would you want me to do? I should do whatever would help you. I would——"

"Would you—be as ready to help somebody else? Somebody I—thought a—lot—of?"

Seabeck evidently saw light. He cleared his throat and spat gravely into a bush. "I see you don't trust me, after all," he said.

"I do. I've got to—I mean I'd have to whether I did or not. It's like this, Mr. Seabeck. It isn't the big D brand—of course, you knew it couldn't be. But it isn't yours, either. Some one was tempted, and was weak. They're sorry now. They want to do the right thing, and it rests with you whether they can do it. You can shut them up in Deer Lodge if you like—you have a perfect right to do it. Some men would do that, and be able to sleep after it, I suppose. But I believe you're bigger than that. I believe you're big enough to see that if a person goes wrong and then sees the mistake and wants to pull back into the straight trail, a man—even the one who has been wronged—would be committing a moral crime to prevent it. To take a person who wants to make a fresh, honest start, and shut that person up among criminals and brand him as a criminal seems to me a worse wrong than to steal a few head of cattle—don't you think so, Mr. Seabeck?"

What Mr. Seabeck thought did not immediately appear in speech. He was pulling a little harder at his whiskers and staring at the ears of his horse.

"That would depend on the person," he said at last. "Some men are born criminals——"

"Oh, we aren't talking about that kind of a man. Surely to goodness you don't call Charlie Fox a born criminal, or Marthy Meilke?"

"Charlie Fox! Is that the person you mean, who has been——"

"Yes, it is! And he is horribly sorry and so is Marthy, and they'll pay you for the cattle. And if you do anything mean about it, it will simply kill poor old Marthy. You couldn't send her to the pen, Mr. Seabeck. Think how she's worked there in the Cove; and Charlie has worked like a perfect *slave*—and he was trying to get a start so he—could—get married——"

"Hm-mm!" Rumors had reached Seabeck, thanks to Billy Louise's dropped lashes upon a certain occasion

—which made him think he saw further light.

"And if you're going to be horrid——"

"Will the—lady he wants to marry give him another chance?"

"Don't you think she ought to—if she l-loves him?" Billy Louise studied the sky line upon the side farthest from Seabeck.

"You say he wants to pay for the cattle and——"

"He'll do anything he can to make amends," said Billy Louise with conviction. "He'll take his medicine and go to jail if you insist," she added sorrowfully. "It will ruin his whole life, of course, and break a couple of women's hearts, but——"

"It's a bad thing—a mighty bad thing—when a man tries to get ahead too fast!"

"It's a good thing when he learns the lesson without having to pay for it with his whole future," Billy Louise amended the statement.

Seabeck smiled a little behind his fingers that kept tugging at his whiskers.

"Did Charlie Fox send Miss Portia——"

"He doesn't know I had any intention of coming," Billy Louise assured him quickly, and with perfect truth. "They'll both be awfully surprised when they find it out"—which was also perfectly true—"and when they see you ride up they'll think you've got the sheriff at your back. I haven't a doubt they——"

"There are a few points I'd like to clear up, if you can help me," Seabeck interrupted. "All this rustling that has been going on for the past year and a half—are Fox and the Meilke woman mixed up in that? I want," he said, "to help the young man—and her. But if they have been operating on a large scale, I'm afraid——"

"I believe Charlie must have been influenced in some ways by bad acquaintances," Billy Louise answered more steadily than she felt. "But his—rustling—has been of a petty kind. I won't apologize for him, Mr. Seabeck. I think it's perfectly awful what he has done. But I think it would be more awful still not to give him a chance. The other rustling is some outside gang, I'm sure. If Charlie was mixed up with them it's very slightly—just enough to damn him utterly if he were arrested and tried. He isn't a natural criminal. He's just weak. And he's learned his lesson. It's up to you, Mr. Seabeck, to say whether he shall have a chance to profit by the lesson. And there's poor old Marthy in it, too. She just worships Charlie, and would do anything—even steal—for him."

Seabeck meditated for a mile, and Billy Louise watched him uneasily from the tail of her eye. To tell the plain truth, she was in a panic of fear at what she had done. It had looked so simple and so practicable when she had planned it, and now when the words were out and the knowledge had reached Seabeck and was beyond her control, she could not think of any good reason for telling him.

Last night, when she lay curled up by the stove under Ward's wolfskin coat, this seemed the only possible way out. To tell Seabeck and trust to his kindness and generosity to refrain from pushing the case. To have Charlie Fox give back what he had stolen or pay for it—anything that would satisfy Seabeck's sense of justice—and let him start honestly. She had thought that Seabeck would be merciful, if she told him in the right way; but now, when she stole a glance at his bent, brooding face, she was frightened. He did not look merciful, but stern and angry. She remembered then that stealing cattle is the one crime a cattleman finds it hard to forgive.

Billy Louise might have spared herself some mental anguish if she could

have known that Seabeck was brooding over the wonder of a woman's love that pardons and condones a man's sins. He was wishing that such a love as Billy Louise's had come to him, and he was wondering how a man could be tempted to go wrong when such a girl loved him. He was laboring under a misapprehension, of course. Billy Louise had permitted him to misunderstand her interest in the matter. If he had known that she was pleading solely for Marthy—poor, avaricious, gray, old Marthy—perhaps his mercy would have been less tinged with that smoldering resentment which was directed, not at the wrongdoer, but at fate which had cheated him.

"I'm glad you came and told me this," he said at last. "Very glad, indeed, Miss MacDonald. Certain steps have been taken lately to push this—wipe out this rustling and general lawlessness, and if you had not told me I'm afraid the mills of justice would have ground your—friends—— Of course, the law would be merciful to Mrs. Meilke. No jury would send an old woman like that—by the way, that breed they have had working for them—he is in the deal, too, I take it."

"Yes, of course. They had to have some one to help. Marthy can't do any riding." Billy Louise spoke with a dreary apathy that betrayed how the reaction had set in. "She stayed in the Cove, in case any one came prowling down there. It seems there's a wire fastened to the gate, and it rings a bell down at the house somewhere when the gate is opened, and, besides that, she had a dog that would tackle strangers. I don't believe," she went on, after a little silence, "that Marthy would have turned dishonest for herself. She was grasping, and all she cared for was getting ahead. It—sort of grew on her, after the years of trying to dig a bare living out of the ground. I—can understand that, and I can see how she would go to any length almost for—Charlie. But——"

"Well, let's not think any more about them until we have to." There was a certain crude attempt at soothing her anxieties. "You've trusted me, Miss MacDonald. I'll try and not disappoint you in the matter—though, unless they are quite separate from the gang which is being run down, it may be hard to protect them. Do you know—whether—any other cowman has suffered from their—mm-mm—haste to get rich?"

"I don't think there's any one but you," Billy Louise replied lifelessly.

"Hm-mm—do you know, Miss MacDonald, whether there was any intimacy between—your friends—and the man we had for stock inspector—Mr. Olney?"

"I can't say as to that." Billy Louise, you see, did not know much about details, but the little she did know made her hedge.

"There's a queer story about Olney. You knew he has left the country, don't you? It seems he rode very hurriedly up to the depot at Wilmer to take the train. Just as he stepped on, a fellow who knew him by sight noticed a piece of paper pinned on the back of his coat. He jerked it loose. It was a—m-m—very peculiar document for a man to be wearing on his back." Seabeck pulled at his whiskers—but it was not the pulling which quirked the corners of his lips. "The man said Olney seemed greatly upset over something, and had evidently forgotten the paper until he felt it being pulled loose. He said Olney looked back then, and he was the color of a pork rind—so the man said. The train was pulling out. The man took the paper over to a saloon and let several others read it. They—mm-mm—decided that it should be placed in the hands of the authorities. Have—m-m—your—friends ever mentioned the matter to you?"

"No," said Billy Louise, and her eyes were wide.

"Hm-mm. We must discover, if we can, Miss MacDonald, whether they are in any way implicated with this man Olney. I believe that this is at present more important that the recovery of any—m-m—cattle of mine which they may have appropriated."

Billy Louise looked at him for a minute. "Mr. Seabeck, you're awfully dear about this!" she told him. "I haven't been as square as you—and I've been —listen here, Mr. Seabeck! I don't love Charlie Fox a bit. I love somebody else, and I'm going to marry him. He's so square I'd hate to have him think I even let you believe something that wasn't true. It's Marthy I'm thinking of, Mr. Seabeck. I was afraid you wouldn't let Charlie off just for her sake, but I thought maybe if you just thought I—wanted you to do it for mine, why, maybe—with two women to be sorry for, you'd kind of——"

"Hm-mm!" Seabeck sent her a keen, blue, twinkling glance that made Billy Louise turn hot all over with shame and penitence. "Hm-mm!" he said again—if one can call that a *saying*—and pulled at his graying whiskers. "Hm-mmm!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

MARTHY.

Billy Louise led the way down the gorge and through the meadow and along the orchard to the little gate. The Cove seemed empty and rather forlorn, with the wind creeping up the river and rattling the dry branches of the naked fruit trees. Not much more than twenty-four hours had slid into the past since Billy Louise had galloped sick-heartedly away from the place, yet she felt vaguely that life had taken a big stride here since she last saw it. Nothing was changed, though, as far as she could see. A few cattle fed in the meadow next the river; a fattening hog lifted himself from his bed of straw and grunted at them as they passed. A few chickens were hunting fishworms in the thawed places of the garden, and a yellow cat ran creepingly along the top rail of the nearest corral, crouched there with digging claws, and pounced down into a flock of snowbirds. A drift of dead apple leaves stirred uneasily beside the footpath through the berry bushes. Billy Louise started nervously and glanced over her shoulder at Seabeck. For some reason she wanted the comfort of his presence. She waited until he came up to her—tall, straight like a soldier, and silent as the Cove itself.

"I'm—scared," said Billy Louise. She did not smile either when she said it. "I—hate empty-feeling places. I'm —afraid of emptiness."

"Yet you are always riding alone in the hills——" Seabeck looked down at her with a puzzled expression in his eyes.

"The hills aren't empty," she told him impatiently. "They're just big and quiet. This is——" She flung out a hand and did not try to find a word for what she felt.

"Shall I go first? I thought you would rather——"

"I would." Billy Louise pulled herself together, angry at her sudden impulse to run as she had run from Ward's quiet cabin. She remembered that unreasoning panic—was it really only yesterday?—and went steadily up the path and across the little ditch which Marthy had dug. Why must sordid trouble and dull misery hang over a beauty spot like this? she thought resentfully.

She stopped for a minute on the doorstep, hesitating before she opened the door. Behind her, Seabeck drew close as if he would shield her from something. Perhaps he, too, felt the deadly quiet and emptiness of the place.

Billy Louise opened the door and stepped into the kitchen. She stopped and stood still so that her slim figure would have hidden the interior from the eyes of Seabeck had he not been so tall. As it was, she barred his way so that he must stand on the step outside.

By the kitchen table, with her elbows on the soiled oilcloth, sat Marthy. Her uncombed hair hung in wisps about her head; her hard old face was lined and gray, her hard eyes dull with brooding. Billy Louise, staring at her from the doorway, knew that Marthy had been sitting like that for a long, long time.

She went over to her diffidently. Hesitatingly she laid her gauntleted hand on Marthy's stooped shoulder. She did not say anything. Marthy did not move under her touch, except to turn her dull glance upon Seabeck standing there on the doorstep.

"C'm in," she said stolidly. "What'd yuh come fer?"

"Miss MacDonald will perhaps explain——"

"She ain't got nothin' to explain," said hard old Marthy with grim finality. "I'll do what explainin's to be done. C'm in. Don't stand there like a stump. And shut the door. It's cold as a barn here, anyway."

"Oh, Marthy!" cried Billy Louise, with the sound of tears in her voice.

"Don't 'oh, Marthy' me," said the harsh voice flatly. "I don't want no Marthyin' nor no sympathy. Well, old man, you're here to colleck, I s'pose. Take what's in sight—'tain't none of it yourn, far's I know, but anything you claim you kin have, fer all me. I've lived honest all my days, an' worked fer what I got. I've harbored thieves in my old age, and trusted them that wa'n't fit to be trusted. I've allus paid my debts, Seabeck. I'm willin' to pay now fer bein' a fool."

"W-where's Charlie?" Billy Louise leaned and whispered the question.

"I d'no, and I don't care. He's pulled out—him an' that breed. I'll have t' pay yuh fer seven growed cattle I never seen till yist'day, Seabeck. You can set yer own price on 'em. I ain't sure, but I've got an idee they was shot las' night an' dumped in the river. You c'n set yer price. I've got rheumatiz so bad I couldn't go'n put a stop to nothin'—but——"

"Oh, Marthy!" Billy Louise was shivering and crying now. "Marthy! Don't be so—so *hard*. It was all Charlie——"

"Yes," said Marthy harshly, "it was all Charlie. He was a thief, an' I was sech a simple-minded old fool I never knowed what he was—I let him go ahead, an' I set in the house with a white apurn tied on me an' thought I was havin' an easy time. I set here and let him rob my neighbors that I ain't never harmed er cheated out of a cent, and soon's he thought he was found out he—left ole Marthy to look after herself. Never so much as fed the hogs or done the milkin' first! Looky here, Seabeck! You'll git paid back, an' I'll take your figgers fer what I owe, but if you git after Charlie I'll kill yuh. You let 'im go. I'm the one he hurt most—and I ain't goin'——" She laid her frowsly old head on her arms, like one who is utterly crushed and dumb.

"Oh, Marthy!" Billy Louise knelt and threw her arms around Marthy's shoulders.

"You've got to come and lie down, Marthy," said Billy Louise after a long, unbroken silence.

"Mr. Seabeck, if you'll start a fire I'll make some tea for her. Come, Marthy—just to please me. Do it for Billy Louise, Marthy."

The old woman rose stiffly, and, with a feebleness that seemed utterly foreign to her usual energy, permitted

Billy Louise to lead her from the kitchen. In the sitting room that Charlie had built and furnished for her, Marthy lay and stared around her with that same dull apathy she had shown from the first. Only once did she manifest any real emotion, and that was when Billy Louise came in with some tea and toast.

"You take all them books out a them shelves an' burn 'em up," she commanded. "An' take them pictures off'n that shelf, of him an' her. Bring 'em t' me!"

Billy Louise set the toast and tea down on a chair, and brought the pictures. She did not say a word, but she looked a little scared, and her eyes were very big—just as they had been when Ward mistook her for Buck Olney and so let her see into another one of the dark places of life. It seemed to Billy Louise that she was being compelled to look into a good many dark places lately.

Marthy took the two photographs, and looked at the first with hatred. "The Jezebel! She won't git to run it over ole Marthy," she muttered, with sullen triumph, and twisted the cardboard spitefully in her gnarled old fingers. "She can't come here an' take all I've got an' never give me a thankye fer it. I'm shet uh *her,* anyway." She twisted again and yet again, till the picture was a handful of ragged scraps of cardboard. Then she raised herself to an elbow and flung the bits far from her, and lay down again with glum satisfaction.

Her fingers touched the other picture, which had slid to the couch. Mechanically she picked it up and held it so that the light from the window struck it full. This was Charlie's face—Charlie with the falsely frank smile in his eyes and with his lips curved as they did when he was just going to say: "Now, Aunt Martha!" in tender protest against her too-eager industry.

Marthy's chin began to quiver while she looked. Her lips sagged with the pull of her aching heart. For the third time in her life Billy Louise saw big, slow tears gather in Marthy's hard blue eyes and slide down the leathery seams in her cheeks. Billy Louise looked, found her vision blurring with her own tears, and turned and tiptoed from the room.

Seabeck was gone somewhere on his horse. Billy Louise guessed shrewdly that he was down in the meadows looking over the cattle and trying to estimate the extent of the thievery. She took Blue, and put him in the stable and fed him, with that half-mechanical habit of attending to the needs of one's mount which becomes second nature to the range-bred. She would not go on to the Wolverine. That needed no decision; she accepted it at once as a fact. Marthy needed her now more than any one. More even than Ward, though Billy Louise hated to think of him up there alone and practically helpless. But Marthy must have her to-night. Marthy was facing her bitterest sorrow since Minervy died—and Marthy was old. Ward, Billy Louise reminded herself sternly, was not old, and he was facing happiness—so far as he or any one knew. She wanted very much to be with Ward, but she could not delude her conscience into believing that he needed her more than did Marthy.

Seabeck returned after a while, and Billy Louise, who was watching from the doorway, met him at the little gate as he was coming up to the house.

"Well, how bad is it, Mr. Seabeck?" she asked sharply just because she felt the imperative need of facts—she who had struggled so long in the quicksands of suspicion and doubts and fears and suspense.

"Hmm-mm—how bad is it—in the house?" he countered. "The real crime

has been committed there, it seems to me. A few head of cattle, more or less, don't count for much against the broken heart of an old woman."

"Oh!" Billy Louise, her hands clenched upon the gate, stared up, wide-eyed, into his face. And this was the real Seabeck, whom she had known impersonally all her life! This was the real man of him, whom she had never known; a flawless diamond of a soul behind those bright blue eyes and that pointed, graying beard; poet, philosopher, gentleman to the bone. *"Oh!* You saw that, too! And they're your cattle that were stolen! You saw it —oh, you're—you're——"

"Hmm-mm—a human being, I hope, Miss MacDonald, as well as a mere cattleman. How is the old lady?"

"Crying," said Billy Louise, with brief directness. "Crying over the picture of that—*swine*. Think of his running off and leaving her here all alone —and not even doing the chores first!" Here, you must know, was broken an unwritten law of the ranch. "And Marthy's got rheumatism, too, so she can hardly walk——"

"I'll attend to the chores, Miss MacDonald." Seabeck's lips quirked under the fingers that pulled at his whiskers. "You say—over his picture?"

"Yes, over his picture!" Billy Louise spoke with a suppressed fury. "With that honest look in his eyes—oh, I could kill him!"

"Hmm-mm—it does seem a pity that one can't. But if she can cry——"

"I see—you believe, too, that tears are a necessary kind of weakness for a woman, like smoking tobacco is for a man—or swearing. Well, I can just tell you, Mr. Seabeck, that some tears pull the very soul out of a person; they're the red-hot pinchers of the torture chamber of life, Mr. Seabeck. Every single, slow tear that Marthy sheds right now is taking that much away from her life. Why, she—she idolized that—that devil. She hadn't much that was lovable in poor old Jase —he was just her husband; he wasn't even a real man. And she never had any children to love, except a little girl that died. And she'd worked here and scrimped and saved till she got just fairly comfortable, and then Charlie Fox came and patted her on the back and called her a game little lady—and poor old Marthy just poured out all the love and all the trust she had in her on *him*. And she's old, and she had starved all her life for a little love—a little affection, and a few kind words. I don't suppose Jase kissed her once in twenty years; I couldn't imagine him getting up steam enough to kiss anybody! And Charlie petted her and did little things for her that nobody had ever done in her life. It meant a whole lot to Marthy to have a man take the water bucket away from her and give her a little hug and tell her she mustn't think of carrying water—oh, you're a man, and I don't suppose you can realize; I didn't myself, till lately——" Billy Louise blushed and then twisted her lips, wondering if love had taught her all this.

"And so Marthy just leaned more and more on him, and let him take care of her and pet her—and she never once dreamed he was doing anything crooked. I thought she did, I know, Mr. Seabeck. I thought she was in it, too; but I see now that Marthy has been living the *woman* in her, these last two years; she'd never had a chance before. And now to have him—to know he's just a common thief and to have him go off and leave her—Mr. Seabeck, I'd be willing to bet all I've got that Marthy would have forgiven his stealing cattle, if he had just *stayed*. She'd have done anything on earth for him; and the bigger the sacrifice she made for him, the more she would have loved him—woman are like that. But to have him go off—and —*leave* her—and not bother his head about what happened to *her*, just so *he*

got out of it—Mr. Seabeck, that's going to kill Marthy. It's going to kill her by inches."

"I—see," he assented, looking thoughtfully at the flushed face and big, shining eyes of Billy Louise.

"And yet," she added bitterly, "she's going to protect him if it takes every cent she's managed to rake together these last thirty years. You heard what she told you. She said she'd kill you if you hurt Charlie. She'd try it, too."

"Hmm-mm! yes. My life has been threatened several times to-day." Seabeck looked at her with eyes atwinkle, and Billy Louise blushed to the crown of her hat. "Do you think, Miss MacDonald, she would feel like talking business for a few minutes?"

"Oh, yes—if she's like me she'll want to get the agony over with." Billy Louise turned with a twitch of the shoulders. She felt chilled, somehow. She had not quite expected that Seabeck would want to talk about his stolen stock at all. She had rather taken it for granted that he would let that subject lie quiet for a while. Oh, well—he was a cattleman, after all.

Marthy did not attempt to rise when Seabeck followed Billy Louise into the sitting room. She caught up her apron and wiped her eyes and her nose, however, and she also slid Charlie's picture under the cheap cushion. After that she faced Seabeck with harsh composure, and waited for the settlement.

"Hm-mm. I have been looking over the cattle," he began, sitting on the edge of a chair and turning his black hat absently round and round by the brim. "You—mm-mm—you tell me there were seven head of grown stock——"

"That they shot and throwed in the river, with the brands cut out," interpolated Marthy stolidly. "I heard 'em say that's how they would git rid of 'em, an' I heard 'em shootin' down there."

"Hmm-mm, yes. Do you know just what——"

"Five dry cows 'n' two steers—long two-year-oles, I jedged 'em to be." Marthy was certainly prompt enough, and explicit enough. And her lips were grim and her faded blue eyes hard and steady upon the face of Seabeck.

"Hmm-mm—yes. I find also," he went on in his somewhat precise voice—that had earned him the nickname of "Deacon" among his punchers—"that there are more young stock vented and rebranded than I—er—sold your nephew. Fourteen head, to be exact. With the cattle you tell me were—mm-m—disposed of last night, that would make twenty-one head of stock for which—mm-mm—I take it you are willing to pay."

"I ain't got the money now," Marthy stated, too apathetic to be either defiant or placating. "You c'n fix up the papers t' suit yerself. I'll sign anything yuh want."

"Hmm-mm—yes. A note covering the amount, with legal rate of interest, will be—quite satisfactory, Mrs. Meilke. I shall make a lump sum at the going price for mixed stock. If you have a blank note, I——"

"You kin look in that desk over there," permitted Marthy. "If yuh don't find any there there ain't none nowhere."

Seabeck did not find any blank notes. He found an eloquent confusion of jumbled letters and accounts and papers, and guessed that the owner had done some hasty sorting and straightening of his affairs. He sighed, and his blue eyes hardened for a minute. Then Billy Louise moved from the door and went over to kneel comfortably beside Marthy, and Seabeck looked at the two and sighed again—though his eyes were no longer stern. He pulled a sheet of paper toward him and wrote steadily in a prim, upright chirography that had never a flourish anywhere, but carefully crossed *t's* and carefully dotted *i's* and

punctuation marks of beautiful exactness.

"You will please sign here, Mrs. Meilke," he said calmly, coming over to them with the sheet of paper laid smoothly upon a last year's best seller and with Charlie's fountain pen in his other hand. "And if Miss MacDonald will also sign, as an indorser, I think I can safely do away with any mortgage or other legal security."

Billy Louise stood up and gave him one look—which Seabeck did not appreciate, because he did not see it.

"I'd ruther give a mortgage," Marthy said uneasily, sitting up suddenly and looking from one to the other. "I don't want Billy Louise to git tangled up in my troubles. She's got aplenty of her own. Her maw's just died, Mr. Seabeck. And I'll bet there was a hospital 'n' doctor's bill bigger'n this cattle note to be paid. I don't want to pile on——"

"Now, Marthy, you be still. I'm perfectly willing to sign this note with you. If it will satisfy Mr. Seabeck, I'm sure it's the very least we can do—or—expect." Billy Louise, bless her heart, was trying very hard to be grateful to Seabeck in spite of the slump he had suffered in her estimation.

"Well, I'll want your written word that yuh won't prosycute Charlie nor help nobody else prosycute him," stipulated Marthy with sudden shrewdness. "If me'n Billy Louise signs this note, we'll pay it; and we want some protection from you, fer Charlie."

"Hmm-mm—I see." He turned and went back to the littered desk and wrote carefully again, upon another sheet of paper. "I think this will be quite satisfactory," he said, and handed the paper to Marthy.

"Git my specs, Billy Louise—off'n the shelf over there," she said, and read the paper laboriously, her lips forming the letters of every word which contained more than one syllable. Marthy, remember, was a plainswoman born and bred.

"I guess that'll do," she pronounced at last, pushing the spectacles up on her lined forehead. "You read it, Billy Louise, 'n' see what yuh think."

"I think it's all right, Marthy," said Billy Louise after she had read the document twice. "It's a bill of sale—and it also wipes the slate clean of any possible—I think Mr. Seabeck is very c-clever."

Whereupon Marthy signed the note, with a spluttering of the abused pen in her stiffened old fingers and a great twisting of her grim mouth as she formed the capitals. Then Billy Louise wrote her name with a fine, schoolgirl ease and a little curl on the end of the last *d*. Seabeck took the pen and paper from the tips of Billy Louise's supercilious fingers, returned with it to the desk for a blotter, returned an envelope, and folded the note carefully and laid it away inside.

"I believe that is all, Mrs. Meilke. I hope you will suffer no further uneasiness on account of your—nephew."

"I'm liable t' suffer some gittin' that five hundred dollars paid up," Marthy returned with some acerbity. "I'm much obleeged to yuh, Mr. Seabeck, fer bein' so easy on us. If yuh hadn't drug Billy Louise into it I'd say yer too good to be human."

"Hmm-mm—not at all," Seabeck stammered deprecatingly, and left the room with what haste his natural dignity would permit.

That ended the Seabeck part of the whole sordid affair, except that he remained for another hour, doing chores and making everything snug for the night. Also he filled the kitchen wood box as high as he could pile the sticks, and brought water to last overnight—since Charlie's plan to pipe water into the cabin had remained a beautiful plan and nothing more. Billy Louise thanked Seabeck, when he was ready to go.

"I knew you were square, and you're really big-souled, too. I'll remember it always, Mr. Seabeck."

"Will you?" Seabeck looked down at her, with his hand upon the latch. "Even if you are put in a position where you must pay that note—you will still—Hm-mm. I see. Before I go, Miss MacDonald, I should like your permission to send a man down here to look after things——"

"No, you mustn't." Billy Louise spoke with prompt decision. "Marthy might think you were—you see, it wouldn't do. I'll see about getting a man. If you will take this note up and leave it in the mail box for me, John Pringle will come up to-morrow. We'll manage all right."

"You're quite right. But, Miss MacDonald, there is something else. I—er—should like to give you a little—wedding gift, since you honored me with the news of your approaching—mm-m—marriage. As an old neighbor, and one of your most sincere admirers, who would feel greatly honored by your friendship, I—should like to have you accept this——" He held something out to Billy Louise and pulled open the door for instant escape. "Good night, Miss MacDonald. I think it will storm." Then he was gone, hurrying down the narrow path with great strides, his lean, long figure bent to the wind, his coat flapping around his lean legs.

Billy Louise closed the door and her half-open mouth, and let down her lifted eyelids. Standing with her back against the wall, she turned that something—an envelope—over twice, then tore off the end and pulled out the contents. It was the note she and Marthy had signed no longer than an hour ago, and written large across the face of it were the words "Paid, Samuel Seabeck."

"The—old—*darling!*" said Billy Louise under her breath, and went straight in to show it to Marthy.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALL RIGHT AND COMFY.

Seabeck was a fine weather prophet, for that time at least. It did storm that night and the next day and the next; a howling, tearing blizzard that carried the snow so far and so fast that it almost wore it out; so that when the spasm was over the land lay bleaker and raggeder than ever, with hard-packed drifts in all the hollows and bare ground between. Of course it was out of the question for Billy Louise to leave the Cove while the storm lasted, so she took care of Marthy and the pigs and chickens and cows, and betweenwhiles she tormented herself with direful pictures of Ward up there alone on Mill Creek. Sometimes she saw him raving in fever and wanting a drink which he could not get, so that thirst tortured him; and calling for her when she could not come. Sometimes she saw him trying to hobble somewhere on those crutches, and falling exhausted—breaking more bones, perhaps; or catching more cold, or something. She was a most distressed Billy Louise, and she wished a hundred times a day that she had stayed with Ward; she wished that in spite of Marthy's need of her. She was terribly sorry for Marthy—but Marthy had not broken any leg; and besides, she was not in love with Marthy.

On the second day John Pringle battled through the storm to see what Billy Louise would have him do. And Billy Louise gave him instructions about finding a man and sending him up to the Cove at once, and looking after the Wolverine Ranch until she came, and having Phœbe send up some clothes for her. She felt better when she had set the wheels in motion again, and as she stood in the door and watched John's broad, stolid back out of sight on his homeward journey, she made up her mind that she would start at daylight

for Mill Creek, and she didn't care whether it stormed or not. She simply would *not* leave Ward there alone any longer. She almost wished that she had told Seabeck about Ward; he would have sent a man over to look after him. But she was selfish, and she wanted Ward to herself; so she had not so much as mentioned his name to Seabeck.

She milked the two cows by lantern light, next morning; and the pigs did not seem to want to leave their nests when she poured their breakfast into the trough by the wavering light she carried. She made coffee for Marthy and took it to her in bed, and told her that she would leave plenty of wood and kindling, and that Marthy must sleep as long as she could and not worry about a single, living thing. She said she must get an early start, because it might be "bad going" and she meant to bring Ward back with her if he were able to travel at all.

"I can't be in two places at once, Marthy, so if you don't mind I'll bring him down here where I can look after the two of you at the same time. You'll let me, won't you? Or else," she added hopefully, "I'll take you both down home. Would you rather——"

"I'd ruther stay here where I b'long," said Marthy dully. "But I don't want you should go t'any trouble about me, Billy Louise. I've rustled fer m'self all my life, and I guess I kin yit. If it wan't fer my rheumatiz I'd ask no odds of anybody. I ain't goin' t' leave, anyway. Charlie might come back, er——"

"Well, you needn't leave." Billy Louise told herself that she was not disappointed, because she had not hoped to persuade Marthy to leave the Cove. "You don't mind if I bring Ward down here, do you, Marthy?"

"No, I don't mind nothin' you kin do," said Marthy in the same dull tone, pouring her saucer full of coffee and spilling some on her pillow because her hands were not as steady as they used to be. "He kin sleep in Charlie's room if yuh want he should." She took two big swallows that emptied the saucer, handed the dish to Billy Louise, and lay down again. "I don't seem to care about nothin'," she remarked tonelessly. "I'd just as soon die as live. I wisht you'd send word to Seabeck I want t' see him, Billy Louise. Oh, it ain't about Charlie," she added harshly. "He's shet uh me, and I'm shet uh him. I—got some other business with Seabeck. Tell him to bring a couple uh men along with him."

"Is there any hurry, Marthy?" Billy Louise stood holding the cup and saucer in her two hands, and stared down anxiously at the lined old face on the pillow. A faint, red glow was in the sky, and the lamplight dimmed with the coming of day. "You don't feel—badly, do you, Marthy?"

"Me? No. Why should I feel bad? But I want t' see Seabeck and a couple of his men, jest as quick as you kin git word to 'em."

"Which ones?" Billy Louise was plainly puzzled. Was Marthy going to make him take those cattle back? It was like her. Billy Louise did not blame her for feeling that way, either. If she had had the money, she would have paid him herself for the cattle.

"It don't matter which ones. You send 'im word, Billy Louise, like the good girl yuh always have been. You've always kinda took the place of my Minervy to me, Billy Louise—and I won't bother yuh much longer."

"Oh, of course I will. The stage will go up this forenoon. I'll send a note to Seabeck. It won't be any bother at all. What shall I say? Just that you want to see him?"

"I kin write it m'self, I guess, if you'll bring me a pencil and paper. I can't seem t' git used to a pen. I kin write all I want t' say."

Billy Louise let it go at that. She

brought the paper and pencil and went after Blue while Marthy, sitting up in bed, wrote her note. Billy Louise was eager to start; and I don't think any one should blame her if she hurried Marthy a little, and if her parting words were few, and her manner slightly abstracted. She knew just how Marthy was feeling —or thought she did; and she was simply wild with anxiety over Ward.

Blue discovered before she was out of the gorge that his lady was wild over something. Never had she come so near to being a merciless rider as on that nippy morning. There were drifts—Blue went through them in great lunges. There were steep hills—but there was no stopping at the top to breathe a while and admire the view. Billy Louise rode with an eye upon the climbing sun and with her mind adding up miles and minutes.

She rode up the creek trail at a long lope, and she pulled up at the stable and slid off Blue, who was wet to his ears and moving every rib when he breathed. (Blue was a good horse, with plenty of speed and stamina, but Billy Louise had given him all he wanted, that morning.) She went straight to a corner of the hay corral and stopped with her hands clutching the top wire.

"Ward Warren, for Heaven's sake what are you doing?" You couldn't have told from her tone that she had been crying, a mile back, from sheer anxiety, or that she "loved him to pieces." She sounded as if she did not love him at all, and was merely disgusted with his actions.

"I'm trying to sink my loop on this buzzard head of a horse," Ward retorted glumly. "I've *been* trying for about an hour," he added, grinning a little at his own plight.

"Well, it's a lucky thing for you he won't let you," Billy Louise informed him sternly, stooping to crawl under the bottom wire. "You've got about as much sense as——" she did not say what. "Give me that rope, and you take yourself and your crutches out of the corral, Mr. Smarty. I just had a hunch you couldn't be trusted to behave yourself."

"Brave buckaroo got lonesome," Ward said, looking at her with eyes alight as he hobbled slowly toward her. "You'll have to open the gate for me, William. Rattler'll make a break for the open if he sees a crack as wide as your little finger."

By then he was near enough to reach out an arm and pull her close to him. "Oh, William girl, I'm sure glad to see you once more. I got scared. I thought maybe I just dreamed you were here; so I tackled——"

"You tackled more than you could handle," Billy Louise finished with her lips close to his. "You haven't got any sense at all. You might have known I'd come the very first minute I could."

"I know—I know."

"And you ought to know you mustn't try to ride Rattler, Ward. What if he'd pitch with you?"

"In that case, I'd pile up, I reckon. Say, William, a broken leg does take a whale of a time to get well. But all the same, I'll top old Rattler, all right. I'd top anything rather than spend another night in that jail."

"You'll ride Blue," Billy Louise told him calmly. "I'm going to ride Rattler myself."

"Yes, you are—not!"

"Do you mean to say *I can't?* Do you think——"

"Oh, I guess you *can* all right, but——"

"Well, if I can, I'm going to. If you think I can't handle a measly old skate like that——"

"He's been running out for nearly two months, Wilhelmina——"

"And look at his ribs! If you'll just kindly go in the house while I saddle——"

"I'll kindly stay right here, lady-girl. You don't know Rattler——"

"And you don't know Billy Louise MacDonald." She wrinkled her nose at him, and turned back to unsaddle Blue. "I really didn't intend to go back right now," she said, "but seeing you've got your heart set on it, I suppose we might as well." Then she added: "We're only going as far as the Cove, anyway —and I really ought to hurry back to look after Marthy. Charlie Fox and Peter pulled out and left her there all solitary alone. I've been staying with her since I left here. I told her we'd be down there, and stay till—further notice."

Billy Louise did not give Ward much opportunity for argument. He was too awkward with his crutches to keep up with her, and she managed to be on the move most of the time.

I may as well admit that she was horribly afraid of Rattler, and horribly afraid that he and Ward would find it out. She did not hurry much. She took plenty of time to put Ward's saddle on Blue, and when she finally took her rope and went in after Rattler, who was regarding her from the corner of the stack where he might run either way, she wished that Ward was elsewhere—and she did not much care where.

But Ward was anxious, and he stayed where he was by the corner of the stable, and swore in violent undertones because he was condemned to look on while she took long chances on getting hurt. Not a move of hers escaped his fear-sharpened eyes, while she went carelessly close to Rattler, and then, with a quick flip, landed the loop neatly over his head. Ward would have felt less pleased if he had known how her heart was thumping. He saw only the whimsical twist of her lips, and thought that she was enjoying a distinctly feminine sense of triumph at her success.

Billy Louise led Rattler boldly up to where lay her saddle and Ward's bridle. She hoped she did not look scared, but she was wondering all the time what Rattler would do when she "piled on"; pile her off, probably, her pessimism told her—for Billy Louise was no lady broncho fighter, for all she rode so well on horses that she knew. There is a difference.

"Sure you want to tackle him, lady-girl?" Ward asked her, after he had himself attended to the bridling—since Rattler was touchy about the head. "Of course, he isn't bad—when you know him; but he's liable to be pretty snuffy after running out so long. And he never had a woman on him. You better let me ride him."

"Don't be silly. You couldn't even mount him, with that game leg. And besides, don't you see I've been wanting an excuse to ride Rattler ever since I knew you? You must have a very poor opinion of my riding——"

"Oh, if you put it that way——" Ward yielded, just as she knew he would. "I haven't a doubt but that you can handle him if you take a notion. Only—if you got hurt——"

"But I won't." Billy Louise braced her courage with a smile and picked up the saddle blanket. But Ward took it from her and hobbled close enough to adjust it.

"He knows me," he explained meaningly. "Better let me saddle up. He don't know but what I can cave a rib or two in if he don't behave. Just hand me the saddle, William, please."

"You're only trying to scare me out," Billy Louise accused him, with a vast relief well hidden. "I'm not a bit afraid of him."

"All right—that'll help some." He steadied himself by the horse's twitching shoulder while he reached carefully for the cinch. "I guess I'm more scared than you are."

"I know you are. I've taken too many tumbles to let the prospect of another one worry me, anyway. Why, Blue

ditched me himself, three different times when I first began to ride him. And even yet the old devil would like to, once in a while." Billy Louise was actually talking herself into a feeling of confidence.

She needed it. When she had helped Ward upon Blue—and that was not easy, either, considering that he only had one leg fit to stand on—and had gone to the cabin for her bag of nuggets and Ward's roll of money which he had forgotten, and had exhausted every other excuse for delay, she picked up Rattler's reins and wound her fingers in his mane, and took hold of the stirrup as nonchalantly as if she were mounting Blue.

She went up at the instant when Rattler jumped sideways from her. She got partly into the saddle, clung there for a few harrowing seconds, and then went over his head and into a snowdrift beside the stable.

Ward groaned, and went white and weak as he watched.

"Good gracious!" grumbled Billy Louise, righting herself and digging snow out of her collar and sleeves. "Stop your laughing, Ward Warren!" (Ward was not laughing, and she knew it.) "I'll ride that onery cayuse, just to show him I can. You Rattler, I'll fix you for that!" She turned to Ward and twisted her lips at him. "I see now why you named him that," she said; "because he rattles your teeth loose."

"You keep off him!" Ward shouted sternly.

"You keep still!" Billy Louise shouted back at him. "We're going to find out right now who's boss."

Whether she referred to Rattler or to his master she did not stipulate; perhaps she meant both of them. At any rate she caught the horse again and mounted—a great deal more cautiously than she had at first—in spite of Ward's threats and entreaties. She got fairly into the saddle and stayed there—with the help of the horn and the luck that had thus far carried her through almost anything she undertook. She was not a bit ashamed of "pulling leather."

"Now we're all right and comfy," she announced breathlessly when the first fight was over, and Rattler, like his master, had yielded to the inevitable. "And we know who's boss, and we're all of us squindiciously happy, because we're headed for home. Aren't we, buckaroo?"

"I suppose so," Ward mumbled doubtingly, eying her sidelong. He was not quite over his scare yet.

"And say, buckaroo!" Billy Louise reined close, so that she could reach out and pinch his arm a little bit. "Soon as your leg is all well, and you're every speck over the hookin' cough, why—*you can be the boss!*"

"Can I?"

"Honest you can. I've"—Billy Louise had the grace to blush a little—"I've always thought I'd love to have somebody bully me and boss me and 'buse me."

They came to the gate, and Billy Louise dismounted—since it was a wire gate and could not be opened on horseback. She closed it after them, looked to her cinch, tightened it a little, patted Rattler forgivingly on the neck, caught the horn with one hand and the stirrup with the other, and went up like a man, while Ward watched intently.

"Oh, you Wilhelmina!" Ward slipped his arm around her, to the disgust of Rattler and Blue, and made shift to kiss her twice. "Long as you live, you'll always be doing something for somebody; that's the way you're made. And nobody's been doing things for you—but if the Lord lets me live that's going to be my job from now on."

They found Seabeck and Floyd Carson and another cowboy at the Cove, just preparing to leave. Marthy, it transpired, had wanted to make her will,

so that Billy Louise would have the Cove when Marthy was done with it. Billy Louise cried a little, and argued a good deal, but Marthy had not lost all her stubbornness, and the will stood unchanged.

When Ward understood all of the circumstances, he hobbled into the kitchen and signaled Seabeck to follow him; and there he counted out five hundred dollars from his last gold harvest and with a few crisp sentences compelled Seabeck to accept the money. (At that, Seabeck stood a loser by Charlie's thievery, but no one knew it save himself, since he never mentioned the matter.)

Billy Louise and Ward were married just as soon as Ward was able to make the trip to the county seat—which was just as soon as he could walk comfortably with a cane.

They stayed the winter in the Cove, and a part of the spring. Then they buried grim, gray old Marthy up on the sidehill near Jase, where she had asked them to lay her work-worn body when she was gone.

They were very busy and very happy, and pretty prosperous with their three ranches and what gold Ward washed out of the gravel bank while they were living up on Mill Creek so that he could prove up on his claim. They never heard of Charlie Fox again or of Buck Olney—and they never wanted to.

If you should some time ride through a certain portion of Idaho, you may find the tiny valley of the Wolverine and the decaying cabins which prove how possible it is for a couple to live in three places at once. If you should be so fortunate as to meet Billy Louise, she might take you through the cañon and show you the washout which always made her and Ward laugh when they passed it. And if you ride up over the hill and along the upland and down another hill you cannot fail to find the entrance to the Cove—and perhaps you will like to ride down the gorge and see the little Eden hidden away there. You may even ride as far as Mill Creek; but you will be told, very likely, that no one ever found any gold there. And if you should meet them, give my regards to Billy Louise and Ward—who never calls himself a football these days.

THE END.

THE ADROITNESS OF DIPLOMACY

HE belonged to the school of diplomacy which teaches that all things must be done with delicacy and adroitness. He was convinced that empires should be overthrown only through intimations, hints, and inferences. His heavy artillery consisted of vague colorings, faint nuances, and slightly suggestive tints. He had a contempt for the blundering, shirt-sleeved diplomacy of the Americans. He was the Persian minister to the United States.

One day, as he was emerging from the department of state in Washington, after a conference with Mr. Bryan, he was approached by William D. Hassett, who covers the diplomatic news for the Associated Press.

"Mr. Minister," suggested Hassett, with great deference, "the world would like to know the result of your conference."

The minister remembered his training. He must do nothing in an abrupt, sudden, or vulgar manner. The stage must be set so that the winking of an eye might cause a cataclysm.

"I am sorry that I can tell you nothing," he said in excellent English, "but I simply cannot. Unfortunately, you see, I do not speak English. But, if you will come to the legation, one of my secretaries will be glad to talk to you."

The Morocco Notebook

BEING THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF THE DANCING MASTER AND HIS ASSISTANT

By Wells Hastings

Author of "The Two Bulldogs," "The Stolen Knocker," Etc

IT was scarcely a fortnight after the incident of the Hawley emeralds when we—René Shawn and I—were brought face to face with a situation so potently charged with the possibilities of romance that it sobered even René's debonair and reckless spirit. Its awful possibilities reached beyond our comprehension and staggered the imagination; we found ourselves doubting them because they were revolutionary and vast. I will be laughed at, I suppose, for recounting the venture at all, for to most I shall appear either a gull or an imaginative and conscienceless liar. Perhaps a dozen scientific men in the world will believe me and redouble their perilous endeavors. They will not say that they believe me. The best I can hope for from everybody else is the amused incredulity with which they would contemplate the three-headed man at the circus. But my health is remarkably good, and it is barely possible that I may live to see the day when my incredible mystery shall be a mystery no longer, but an appalling revolution which may upset civilization or which may—who can tell?—right the bitterest wrongs in the world. I shall be human enough to enjoy the memory of the disbelief that I know will greet this account of our adventure.

By Shawn's deliberate intent our pupils and patrons at the Salle de Danse were pretty much all of a type; our sieve of exclusiveness, in keeping out the coarse, gave us only the sifted few. No two people are exactly alike, but society is built upon type, and society folk are more monotonously typical of each other than people of any other class. They were richly profitable to us, but their monotony bored us more than I can say.

"The difference of one atom and another in the cream of society," Shawn once bitterly complained, "is only a matter of density."

And I am convinced that it was chiefly for the sake of variety that he stretched his own rule and admitted such people as the Dusseldorps to our sacred precincts. Why they wished admittance is something beyond me.

Probably Mrs. Dusseldorp was the moving force which brought them to us, for she was, and is, a pretty, feather-brained, plump little bit of femininity, evidently eager for gayety and all the tinseled trumperies of fashionable life; the sort whose marriage to men like Dusseldorp causes universal consternation, and yet the sort to which men of his type are frequently prone to lean. Dusseldorp is not the only savant who has married a woman who is little more than an amiable doll of lively flesh and blood. She fitted in by a native aptitude fairly successfully with our assembly, but Dusseldorp himself seemed as strikingly incongruous as if he had dropped into our salon from the moon.

He was a small man, American born,

Shawn told me, but in appearance a reversion to past Teutonic ancestry, a man past fifty, I should say, with a grizzled shock of hair and a short but ferocious beard—a comic cartoonist's ideal of a scientist. Except for owlish, yellow-tinted glasses, he appeared each evening in smoothly correct dress that bespoke the labors of some tireless and expert valet; for when his hour of dancing was over he was mussy and rumpled and apparently more nearly his normal self. I think he enjoyed himself; certainly he danced with fervor and intelligence in spite of a chronic ineptitude; and Shawn, deaf to the distinct murmurs of disapproval of his other patrons, fairly gloried in him and gave him much of his personal attention.

My own partners, I fear, suffered much when Shawn and Dusseldorp danced together. It was a spectacle that unfailingly diverted me. Dusseldorp serious and intent, striving grimly to digest rhythmic motion with his brain, and clutching Shawn firmly somewhere about the hips, his disordered gray hair just on a level with Shawn's shoulder; and Shawn, slim, tall, and cynically exquisite, bending his flaming head to murmur such serious things as "One, two, three, four, two-step right, two-step left; one, two, three, four; slide, slide, slide, swing—now one step again!" as the short, rumpled-looking legs made solemn shift to keep pace with the elegant silk-stockinged ones.

But although the antics of Dusseldorp amused me, there was something about the man himself which won my sympathy, some magnetism, some naïve and boyish enthusiasm. I do not pretend to explain it to myself, but I found myself liking him, which is rather extraordinary, as I am cold and somewhat suspicious by nature and training. But I did grow to have a feeling of sympathetic interest in the little scientist, and it angered me even while I smiled over his efforts in the Ostend to see that fool wife of his monopolized by such a man as Dupont Graham.

At first it had been hard for me to find a partner for her, for, pretty as she was, the Dusseldorps distinctly did not "belong," and, in a gathering where every one knew every one else, at least by name and reputation, the Dusseldorps were looked at askance as interlopers, and even by some as the intrusive edge which might be followed by the wedge of the heterogeneous public. For some time Shawn and I had to dance with her ourselves, if she was to dance at all. Then, without warning, Dupont Graham, one of the high priests of the innermost circle, sought an introduction from Shawn, and proceeded to take for himself her every spare moment. When she was not dancing with Shawn or with me, she was dancing, or sitting, or strolling about our rooms with Dupont Graham.

Graham—I am giving him a fictitious name here, as his reputation is a national one, and unsmirched as far as I know by any other affair than this—was a man of undoubted powers of attraction. His eminence in the financial world made him a marked man in any gathering, and although his features were harsh and even sinister, his extraordinary height and the very weight of his bone and muscle gave him a commanding presence. It was scarcely to be wondered at that such a woman as Mrs. Dusseldorp, eagerly groping for a foothold in society, should be tremendously flattered.

But if my sympathy is a thin affair, my curiosity suffers from no lack of vitality. Shawn had laid none of a chaperon's duties upon me, but my interest in Dusseldorp, and Graham's unaccountable behavior, led me into playing something of a chaperon's part, and whenever I had an opportunity, or could make one, I used it to get to the

bottom of what seemed to me a mystery.

My movements were discreet; in the game Shawn and I play with life, a certain stealthiness is so often necessary that neither of us feels any foolish self-consciousness in listening, unsuspected, to the conversation of others. But I think I did flush in the dark of the conservatory when I first successfully surprised a tête-à-tête between Graham and Mrs. Dusseldorp. I had been prepared for some softness, for some hint of unwise tenderness; but they were talking together in quiet animation, like two impersonal comrades, and their subject was Dusseldorp himself.

I was startled and unaccountably embarrassed, but for all that this friendship seemed to me too strong to be without some motive, and it was hard for me to believe uncomplicated good of a man like Graham. I managed to hear other conversations and scraps of talk between them, but for the most part the subject was the same. Graham even discussed the scientist's profession, as well as his lack of technical knowledge enabled him, with the scientist's wife.

My suspicion of Dupont Graham would have disappeared entirely if it had not been suddenly refreshed by a small accident.

The Salle de Danse was, as I have said, on the top floor of a tall Fifth Avenue building, and it was lighted in the daytime by a long skylight, that stretched practically the length of the larger room. Portions of this glass could be raised, and there were several other windows, so that we did not lack for ventilation; but all our patrons did not dance at once, and for those who sat, the place had to be kept reasonably heated. Dancing is already growing away from the strenuous contortions of its infancy, but even a stately-looking hesitation waltz still requires a considerable exertion, and even the elegant grow warm with persistent effort.

It was after a particularly vigorous one-step that I brought my partner to a seat at the exact moment when Graham and Mrs. Dusseldorp sank into the seats adjoining. Graham was out of breath, and his face was red and moist with perspiration. As I watched him he plunged his hand into his breast pocket in search of his handkerchief, and drew out, to my gaping astonishment, and his own instant confusion, a crumpled piece of black silk. He crammed it hastily back again and found the handkerchief he was looking for, but I had seen enough to recognize the thin elastic and slit eyeholes of a mask.

I have unfortunately not yet acquired my master's absolute control of expression. Graham, with a sidelong glance, must have seen me gaping, for his flush deepened, and he turned and spoke to me.

"Silly ass. What?" he said. "Wore the infernal thing at a bal masque last night, and my lazy rascal evidently forgot to go through my pockets, which isn't usually one of his failings."

It was a fine impromptu, but I was certain that it was not the truth, for although he looked at me straight enough, his eyelids flickered with the strain, and it was hardly likely that such a man as Graham would wear the same clothes on successive evenings. I should have been impressed less by no explanation at all.

I laid the matter before Shawn the next morning over our coffee and rolls, but I drew small comfort from my confidence.

"My dear Frank," he laughed, when I had done, "his business is none of our affair. I have been watching it, too, and I confess that I dislike Dupont Graham as much as you evidently do; but so far I can't see our way clear

to making any considerable profit out of him."

"Profit?" I repeated. "Who said anything about profit?"

Shawn's amber eyes swept over my face with cool amusement, and without answering me he pushed back his chair and drew out his case of long Russian cigarettes. When he had smoked a while he evidently decided that he had irritated me long enough.

"Nobody said anything about profit, Frank," he said, "but I have been thinking something about it. If it is any satisfaction, I'll tell you that I should like to take something from Dupont Graham as much as you would, and if opportunity offers we'll do it. I have a guess what he is after, but it is only a guess, and we shall have to wait and watch until I'm a little more sure. What do you say to boxing a couple of rounds, or would you rather fence this morning?"

He flung aside his cigarette, and jumped up to get the fencing foils. I knew that it was hopeless to try to drag him back to the subject.

We fenced for almost an hour, and spent another beneath the scientific pummelings of the trainer who came in to give us our morning rubdown, which commenced the regular order of our day. It was not until a week later that René Shawn spoke to me of Graham, when the affair that had seemed to slumber beneath our eyes came to a startling crisis in a rushing sequence of events.

I had continued my surveillance of the Dusseldorps and Dupont Graham, but on that particular evening I confess that I felt no especial premonition. I have none of René's faculty of psychically sensing the about-to-happen. I noticed that Graham left at an earlier hour than usual, and that he was a bit impatient over some small delay the cloakroom boy made over his hat and coat. But it was not until I missed René from the floor that it occurred to me that something had gone wrong, and when I noticed that neither of the Dusseldorps was in sight, I made some hasty excuse to my pupil partner, and went as unobtrusively as possible to one of the little conservatories at the end of the dancing hall.

In the first I found only two young people, who had slipped into its seclusion for a stolen moment away from the eyes of some chaperon—there are idyllic moments even in the lives of the ultrafashionable when the world seems young—but in the second I found René Shawn holding Mrs. Dusseldorp in his arms.

She was struggling frantically, and I stared at them in amazement; for I knew that sentiment was out of the question, and that René would never dream of any rough tactics, even if her jewels had been worth the attention of his cupidity. We make our living by our wits, to be sure, but out-and-out thievery has little part in our scheme of life. We have had our victims, but they have never been the young and innocent, and, last of all, both of us realize that physical violence is the most dangerous of means, never to be called on until the final, acute necessity. Then I saw that René's slender, muscular hand was pressed firmly across the struggling woman's mouth.

"I am only trying to keep her from screaming, Frank," he said, in a low tone. "Stand by the door and keep people out of here.

"Mrs. Dusseldorp, I am going to let you go as soon as you are quiet, and that means that I am putting you on your honor not to scream. Screaming will do you no good, and will complicate things so that I may not be able to help you. You must know that I had no hand in this, and that I am eager to be of some assistance. Ah, that's better. Remember I am trusting you. See, I am going to let you go."

He warily took away his hand as he spoke, and, as she made no outcry, he released her entirely.

"Better sit down quietly," he said, "and let us attend to things for you. Now, Frank, lend a hand here quickly."

He moved aside as he spoke, and, on the floor behind him, I saw a prone, black shape, a gray, shock-haired head lying inertly upon a limp arm—the scientist, Dusseldorp, more rumpled and mussy looking than ever. He seemed, indeed, scarcely more than a heap of carelessly discarded clothing.

At a gesture from Shawn, I turned the little man over upon his back, and laid my hand over his heart. It was beating, and I nodded the information to Shawn.

"He is all right, Mrs. Dusseldorp," Shawn said.

She got up weakly from her seat and knelt on the floor beside me. "But what is the matter, Monsieur Colvaine?" she asked. "What can have happened to him? I was worried, and I came to look for him, and I found him so." She shuddered and threw out her hand in a trembling gesture. "When Monsieur Shawn clapped his hand over my mouth, as I started to scream, I thought we were all to be murdered. I could not see who held me."

Shawn was bending over the body beside us, and now he turned abruptly to Mrs. Dusseldorp. "Why were you worried?" he asked, in that crisp, imperious way of his. He is not a shouting man; his orders lose no force when whispered.

"Because I thought——" In spite of her terror, Mrs. Dusseldorp checked herself.

Shawn shrugged his shoulders. "Because you thought you had talked too much. Because it occurred to you, or, at least, it began to occur to you, that it was unwise to betray your husband's confidences for the sake of entertaining a flattering acquaintance.

"See here, Frank." Shawn reached across and raised Dusseldorp's arm, drawing something gently from the clenched fingers of the scientist. "Is this what you told me about?"

"Yes," I said, "I think so." I took the black mask from Shawn's fingers and looked at it carefully. "It looks like it, René. Of course it must be the same. What has he done to him?"

For answer, Shawn tipped back the little scientist's fiercely bearded chin, and I saw that the low evening collar was torn, and that purple finger prints already showed on each side of the throat.

"We must get him home where he can be looked after," Shawn said. "Go out in the hall, Frank, and pull the electric-light switch in that little cupboard. Hurry, or people will be looking for us."

I made my way unobtrusively through the crowd, pulled the switch, and stepped quickly back into the room again. Shawn had already struck a match, and was lighting a candle in one of the sconces on the wall, where it shone feebly in the engulfing darkness. People waited good-naturedly enough, but it was clear that already the darkness had made them uneasy. No one is so easily upset by mischance as the city dweller constantly surrounded by modernity. After I had made a pretense of telephoning down to the janitor, and my announcement that a large fuse had been burned out that could not be replaced that night, they went willingly enough and left us undisturbed to our work.

I got a taxicab, and Shawn and I carried Dusseldorp down the deserted stairway between us. We took little risk, for the stairways of a modern building, where all the traffic goes up and down by elevator, are almost untrodden even in the daytime. Mrs.

Dusseldorp, by Shawn's instruction, went down in the elevator ahead of us, and waited for us in the cab. We made the journey without incident. Fortunately the scientist had a house of his own, so that we were able to let ourselves in with his latchkey, and were saved the trouble of passing the inquisitive doorman of an apartment house.

Once we had the little man in bed, and the doctor telephoned for, I was anxious to get away, and fully expected Shawn to be as eager as I. Our part in the affair had been a perfectly innocent one, or, rather, we had taken no part at all; but at no time do we court notoriety, and, to my mind, the less we appeared the better it would be for us. But, although the doctor was long in coming, Shawn stayed on, making every effort in his power to bring Dusseldorp to consciousness.

If I had not been anxious and impatient, the scientist's bedroom would have interested me. I suppose his actual laboratory was a large one, but evidently the man's love for his work was so great that he was unhappy without some of it about him. The laboratory of the university from which I was once expelled was, as I remember it, much less adequately equipped than this bedroom of Dusseldorp's. The bed alone proclaimed it as a place where a man might sleep; in every other aspect it was a workroom. The walls were lined with filing cases and tables of instruments; big and little retorts jostled each other in every corner; huge electrical apparata loomed mysteriously here and there, and on a long table rough squares of metal glinted dully in the shaded lamplight. It was the intimate room of a scientist, but it looked for all the world like the chamber of a magician, a birthplace of necromancy and black art.

Contrary to my expectation, René's efforts, by their very persistence, proved successful. Dusseldorp came to a temporary consciousness before the somewhat tardy arrival of his physician. He stirred suddenly upon the bed, drew a great, whistling breath, and opened his eyes. For a moment he stared wildly about; then, recognizing Shawn bending over him, he spoke. His voice came painfully and with a muffled, rattling sound, but we managed to hear him.

"My notebook—black morocco—notes in cipher—too easy. Was in waistcoat pocket—Graham knew—masked, but I saw—got it, I think." His face was contorted with pain, and it was evident that the effort of speaking was rapidly exhausting him; but when René looked through the evening clothes, which we had cast over a chair, without success, Dusseldorp motioned him near and spoke again.

"Get it," he entreated. "Save the world—cipher too easy."

René smiled reassuringly. "I understand, sir," he said. "You can rest assured you shall have it before dark tonight. He won't have time to puzzle out the cipher before then."

At his office, Dupont Graham is, I imagine, a difficult man to see. A man of his importance in the financial world must of necessity hedge his privacy round about with all sorts of barriers, if he is to escape the army of cranks who continually lay siege to men of unusual wealth. And it is probable that if Shawn had presented his card, we should have cooled our heels for some time in the outer office before Graham so much as heard of our presence.

But when, that next morning, Shawn and I reached the Wall Street district at a little after ten, we were prepared to go straight to the work before us; and if Shawn had looked the night before the beau ideal of a dancing master, he looked now the perfect pattern of the great man of affairs. His garments were somberly rich, his flaming head was decorously covered by an ugly flat-topped derby, and he had laid

aside his slim and elegant ebony stick for a heavy, gold-headed malacca.

He smiled blandly upon the protestations of a middle-aged office boy, as he unfastened for himself the wicket gate which was the first barrier against the public, and, although we were subjected to the uneasy stares of Graham's outer clerical force, our progress toward Graham's unlettered door was so unerring and so confident that we reached it without interruption. Shawn flung open the door without knocking, and, motioning me before him, stepped in and shut it in the anxious face of the still-following office boy.

Dupont Graham looked up from behind his flat mahogany desk with an angry scowl that gave place, as he recognized us, to surprise and apprehension in turn. It seemed to me that I saw his right hand twitch toward the open drawer of his desk.

Shawn opened the interview without preliminary.

"Mr. Graham," he said, "an unfortunate incident occurred at my place of business last night that I am sure you must regret in the saner light of another day. On that assumption, I have come here to give you the opportunity of quiet restitution."

I knew that Shawn spoke abruptly that Graham should have as little chance as possible for collecting his thoughts; but I will say for Graham that he was plainly a man whose mental processes were under unusual control.

"Will you kindly tell me what you are talking about?" he asked. "Or first, perhaps, you may wish to apologize for your unannounced intrusion of my privacy."

Shawn smiled and shook his head. "I think not, Mr. Graham. I have come, since you wish me to be explicit, for Doctor Dusseldorp's morocco notebook."

"I don't understand you."

"Please try to. I mean the notebook which you took away from him last night, after you had choked him into insensibility. It is in cipher, as you have doubtless discovered, and can do you no good. You see, you left your mask behind you—the mask which Mr. Colvaine here had already seen in your possession. Dusseldorp, himself, recognized your face when he had the good fortune to unmask you. You could scarcely have stooped to assault except with a very great criminal object in view. I must, therefore, beg you to return the notebook."

Graham's face grew scarlet, and this time he did plunge his hand into the drawer, and draw out his automatic.

"Get out!" he said, waving it toward us. "I don't know what you are talking about, but it is evident that the pair of you are simple blackmailers, and I advise you when you leave my office to leave town as well." Graham had risen and was coming toward us menacingly.

"I am here not only to protect the reputation of my place," Shawn went on, in a quiet voice, "and the property of one of my patrons, but also to warn you of a grave danger. For his own protection Doctor Dusseldorp has seen fit to insert a large wafer of radium in the binding of his notebook; between it and his body he wears a thin sheet of lead, but he has considered that if the notebook ever were taken from his person, the thief, being ignorant of the presence of radium, would neglect to safeguard himself with a like screen of lead, and so would presently die in such a manner as to make his identification possible. Death from radium burns, although common enough to be recognized by any modern medical practitioner, is still unusual enough to attract wide public attention. By simply watching the newspapers, Doctor Dusseldorp hoped to easily recover his property if by any chance it should be taken from him."

"Get out of here!" Graham said, with another wave of the automatic.

"I merely wished to warn you," protested Shawn, "and I regret that you are not open to reason." He bowed low as he spoke; and, as he bowed, I knew in a flash what he intended, and set my back against the door.

I had made no mistake. As Shawn straightened up from that low bow, in which his right foot had been drawn mincingly backward, that foot shot forward again in a swift arc, knocking the automatic from Graham's fingers, and, without slackened force or speed, swerving inward and upward until it caught the banker full beneath the chin. In practice, and with padded feet, René had often given me gentle imitations of this blow, which, for all his care, had rocked my head upon my shoulders. Graham went down as limply as if he had been shot.

"Now, Frank!" said René.

We stooped together and lifted the big banker back into his chair.

"It will be half an hour before he comes to," said René, "but we had better be getting out of this. How did you like my radium story? Impromptu nonsense, of course, but I wanted to see if he had the notebook on him. He is a pretty cool customer, but he couldn't help raising his hand toward his breast pocket, and that was all I needed. I was afraid he might have stuck the thing in the safe, which would have complicated matters. See here!"

From Graham's pocket he drew out a long bill fold. One side of it was crammed with bills of big denominations, the other held only a shabby black morocco notebook.

"That's the thing. You wouldn't think a man would commit a crime for a tattered little thing like that, when"—René ran appraising eyes and fingers over the bristling bills—"he carries four or five thousand dollars about with him just as handy spending money. But I'll admit, Frank, the thing is a temptation to me, too. Heigh-ho, but I'm an honest man, my Frank. We shall take this wonderful book back to Dusseldorp, and caution him not to confide more of his secrets to his wife—and for ourselves we shall keep only these bills as a fine to our rough pupil for his last evening's behavior, and his this morning's lack of courtesy."

I helped him to prop Graham over his desk in a fairly natural and studious attitude. René even replaced the automatic in the drawer by his side. Then I went out ahead, while René, standing behind me, arranged the spring catch of the door, that Graham might not be disturbed until he regained consciousness.

"What is it? What is in the notebook?" I asked, as the taxicab was whirling us uptown again.

"Look for yourself," said Shawn, and handed it to me.

I turned the pages. They were filled with a fine and orderly cipher, which was utterly incomprehensible. Graham knew, and Shawn had guessed, but for the life of me I could not guess what made the book so valuable.

Dusseldorp was presently to enlighten me. He was sitting up in a dressing gown when we arrived, and seemed to have progressed well toward recovery. He managed a hoarse shout of triumph and gladness when Shawn laid the book upon his knees.

"Young man," he exclaimed, "I do not know how to thank you! I have spent a restless, feverish night. These notes are in cipher, but that is small protection. That man could have made it out in a few days, just as you or I, or any other man of unusual ability, could read it in an afternoon. I do not ask how you got it. I am only thankful to have it again. Please toss it into the fire over there for me. No, do as I say"—as Shawn hesitated. "I have all my formulæ in my head. It was a fool-

ish weakness to put them into writing, to endanger the present balance of all society."

His face flushed with excitement, and his strangled voice grew stronger.

"Listen, I will tell you; for you have earned the reward of hearing before the rest of the world, and I know from your face that you are not a babbler. I have discovered it! All advanced scientists know that it is coming, but I, I, Dusseldorp, have done it. Perhaps some day you may bear me witness.

"You know, do you not, that the discovery of radial activity has upset the knowledge and theory of the scientific world? Your man in the street knows of radium, but we have found a hundred other new elements, thorium X, actinium X—a host of others. It all means that we are at the gateway of the most wonderful of all discoveries. It means that we are discovering basic metals, that even other scientists than myself have recognized the possibility of elemental change. The old philosophers, foolish as they were, were inspired enough to dream of it. Your alchemist worked like a fool with a most disordered method, but he was a prophet, nevertheless. *I* have made alchemy a scientific possibility."

"Do you mean," I asked, "that you can change base metal into gold?"

"I mean more than that." His eyes gleamed with the inner fires of triumph. "It was one of my early and simpler experiments to change lead into gold—they are not so very different in weight and substance—but I can now change lead into iron, a problem vastly more difficult. It was, however, this notebook of my work on gold which Graham contrived to steal, and of which I feared he would make such unwise personal use as to ultimately cause universal disaster. Gold is our standard. If it should be made by an unscrupulous person in such unlimited quantities as I can make it, you can see for yourself that every value we have on earth would be overturned, that order would suddenly be turned into chaos. It may be that I may never reveal my discovery in my lifetime. Such a thing must come gradually, if it is to find human society prepared."

He got up painfully and lifted a metal block from a table. "See," he said, "here is iron. I give you my word that this was once a mass of other metals, gold and lead and silver and copper."

"And this?" asked René, laying a finger on a big, dull-yellow block.

Dusseldorp shrugged. "Only gold. I have a quantity which I made in my first experiment."

René's smile was cynical, and his voice was far from credulous. "Do you think it would pass a government assay office?" he asked.

Dusseldorp looked at him angrily. "You—you an intelligent man—can you doubt it? I am grateful to you, but I own that you make me angry. Take the thing and see. No, take it. I can make it in the quantities I wish—it is nothing—and when you have proved it you shall write me an apology." He laughed as his ill temper faded. "I only wish that I might find that 'maxixe' of yours as simple."

We have had a small portion of the block minted, just to make sure, and René and I have both had a gorgeous set of links and studs fashioned as mementos; but the larger portion of the block is stored away still in a safe-deposit box which we hold under another name. René calls it the key of ultimate liberty, and I own that in such a life as ours it may some time prove of great value against the day of reckoning

The first story in the series about Rene Shawn, the Dancing Master, appeared in the June month-end POPULAR.

Proxies

By Hugh S. Fullerton

Author of "Faith and the .300 Hitters," Etc.

A queer ending to the hilarious celebration of four straight victories won by the Battlers. Not exactly a temperance lecture, but with a moral you can write for yourself when you have read the tale

AND when-n-n' I die-e-e don't bury-y-y-y me a-tall-lll!" The Booze Hounds of the Battlers were baying on the trail, and celebrating their four straight victories over the Hustlers in wine and song.

Burke, the big pitcher, leaned against the bar artistically, his pitching arm draped over the rail so that the elbow served to steady him, and one foot planted upon the foot rail with an air of long practice. Jensen, the big first baseman, bellowed out the song with his hands deep in pockets and chin pointed at the picture over the bar. Schlusser, the fence-smashing outfielder, gripped the rail with one hand, and, between verses, pleaded for "mit more feeling yet! Mit feeling!"

Burke's booming baritone stopped suddenly. Schlusser's voice cracked and ended in a squeak, and only Jensen sang on.

Manager Mike Terhune, of the Battlers, whose sudden entrance had caused the interruption, stood speechless until Burke punched Jensen in the ribs and explained the situation by pointing toward the manager, laughing when Jensen's jaw dropped and he stood blinking.

"And as for you," concluded Mike Terhune, as the peroration of an address that had kept the bartender speechless with admiration for ten minutes, "as for you," pointing to Burke, "this will cost you a month's salary and your bonus, and by the holy mackerel of Newburyport, it'll cost you your chance to go to the majors next season, and if I could I'd take your shirt."

"Aw, say, Mike," protested Burke, "you needn't be jumping me like that. I'm not drunk!"

"No, you're not drunk," replied the irate manager in a frenzy of sarcasm. "You're not drunk, but Jensen is, and so is Schlusser. You never are drunk. You're pickled so that I expect to sell you to Heinze for his fifty-eighth variety. Just when we've got a chance for the pennant, the first time in six years, you, the best pitcher on the staff, take this big fathead Swede and this bone-headed Dutchman out and stew them to the gills. By the great flaked halibut of the Newfoundland Banks——"

Here Mike trailed off into another oration that left the bartender marveling, and finished with a burst of eloquence that drove the trio of offending athletes ahead of him into the street.

Halfway to the hotel the unsteady trio, marching in irregular formation twenty paces ahead of the angry manager, recovered sufficiently to speak.

"The old boy certainly can step some in conversation," remarked Burke.

"I wonder if dem fines go?" asked Schlusser.

"Aye, golly," said Jensen seriously, "I think Mike is sore!"

Burke doubled over to laugh, and

again the wrath of the manager was terrible.

"By heavens, Burke, I'll tell your brother!" he roared, exasperated beyond endurance by the laughter and not understanding the provocation. In an instant the manner of the big pitcher changed.

"Aw, say, Mike," he said, pleading and humble, "you wouldn't do that? Mike, promise me you won't, and honest I'll be president of the Never Again Club. I'll pitch three games a week, Mike. I won't touch a drop."

"I'll tell him," said the manager firmly. "I'll tell him as soon as we see him. You've damaged my ball club often enough, and this time I'm going to stop you. Understand?"

By the time the quartet reached the hotel Burke was reduced to a begging, abject image of his usually confident self, and the reduction was the greater because it was averred that Burke could strut while standing still. The reason for the sudden and remarkable change in the attitude of the big pitcher was that there was one person in the world for whom he cared. That was his twin brother, an iron molder.

Burke cared not for the opinion of press, public, or manager; whether he advanced to the major leagues or remained forever in the "bushes." He drank as often as he pleased in seven cities of the league, but in the eighth he was on his good behavior, for with each swing around the circuit when that city was reached Burke's brother came down from his home in a country town and visited the team. The brother's admiration for Burke was as great a wonder as was Burke's devotion to him, and it was well, for Burke always pitched two games in the series against the Unicorns for the benefit of his admiring brother; and the Battlers chalked those two up as won before they were played.

The outbreak of Burke and his boon companions, known as the Booze Hounds, was particularly exasperating to Mike Terhune at that time. The Battlers were fighting for the lead of the pennant race, and the series against the Unicorns, who were leading the race, promised to be the decisive one. On the eve of that series, with Terhune counting upon Burke to win two out of four games because his twin brother would be present, Burke had slipped back from the paths of rectitude and carried two others with him.

On the train the next morning, traveling toward the four-game series against the Unicorns, Burke was sullenly remorseful. The fact that he had brought a bottle in his grip and was taking frequent nips from it was unknown to Terhune, who suspected nothing, as Burke never had been a drinker for the sake of drinking, but for the love of conviviality.

Barlow, the catcher, scented and saw, and went to Terhune.

"Say, Mike," he commenced, "you're not going to tip it off to his brother that Burke drinks, are you?"

"Did that big stiff send you to me?" demanded the irate manager. "If he did you trot back and tell him I'm going to make good. I'm going to make a ball player or a bum out of him. I've stood him long enough. Here we are, right on the edge of the hardest series of the year, and he goes on a bat——"

"Aw, he was only drinking beer," protested Barlow.

Terhune maintained an impressive silence, and Barlow, having failed, retreated to make a dismaying report to Burke, who thereupon retreated to the smoking compartment and communed with his woes and his bottle.

"Aw, cut it out, Bill," advised Barlow. "Mike ain't a-goin' to tip it off to your buddie. He's just bluffing."

"Bluffin'?" snorted Burke. "I know

him. He's got his stubborn Irish up, and he'll make good."

It was seven o'clock that evening when the Battlers reached the city of the Unicorns. Their train was delayed, and the players were cross and weary from the long ride. Burke was sullen and silent.

"Cut it out, Bill," advised Barlow. "You don't want your brother to see you stewed."

"Aw, what's the difference?" snarled Burke. "My brother will be here tomorrow morning, and he might as well see me stiffened up as to have Mike tell him."

Barlow argued in vain. Burke was in a black mood and angry and revengeful toward his manager.

"'Tain't as if I'd gone out on a regular souse," he complained to Barlow. "Mike knows as well as you do that I never slop over when I'm going to see my brother. He's just got it in for me."

He refused to ride with the other players in the bus from the railway station, and Barlow, fearing the worst, volunteered to walk with him to the hotel. Three times on the walk Burke made stops, and, against the advice of his companion, he drank in each place.

It was eight o'clock when they came to the hotel, and Burke defiantly announcing his intention of "telling Mike where he got off at," and serving notice that he would not pitch a game against the Unicorns. They were entering the lobby when suddenly Burke, who was in advance, sprang back and dragged Barlow with him to the sidewalk.

"Holy gee!" he exclaimed excitedly. "My brother!"

Barlow looked, and, standing in the center of the lobby, in an attitude of waiting, was Burke's twin brother.

"He didn't see me," he whispered. "For Heaven's sake, Bar, get to him and get him away. I can't let him see me now."

"What are you going to do, Bill?" asked the anxious catcher.

"I'm goin' to duck, Turkish bath or some place. I'll run to that bath up street and stay there all night. You send me up a clean shirt and collar in the morning. You've got to help me, Bar. I wasn't looking for him until morning. You get hold of him; tell him I went to spend a night with a friend of mine, not knowing he was to be in town. Then you take care of him, and keep him away from Mike. Don't give Mike a chance to tip it off that I drink."

"I'll try," said Barlow. "I'll take him around town, buy him a few drinks, and stow him away in our room for the night."

"He don't drink," said Burke. "Do something with him. I'll be down first thing in the morning."

Burke dodged past the hotel window and hurried away. Barlow, entering the hotel, advanced upon the waiting twin.

"Looking for Burke?" he asked pleasantly. "Say but he'll be disappointed. He wasn't expecting you in until morning and went out to a friend's house for the night."

"I thought I'd come down and surprise Will," said the brother. "I knew he'd be glad to see me, and I wanted to be here when he got in."

"That is tough," said Barlow sympathetically. "He'll kick himself all over town. I walked part of the way downtown with him, and he caught a car, going somewhere out in the suburbs. Had supper yet?"

"No. I was waiting for Will."

"Let's go out somewhere and eat. This hotel is bum, and I'll buy," suggested Barlow to lure the twin away.

"I'm glad to go," said the brother anxiously. "Those two fellows over there in the corner have been following me around, speaking to me. I guess they take me for Will."

"Say, that's rich!" laughed Barlow. "That's Sammy Goldman, from our town, and his partner, Kellum. They're two of the hottest sports we have. Guess they came over to see the series here. They took you for Bill——"

"I can't understand it," replied Bill's brother. "They asked me to drink and to play poker with them—and I'm sure they would know Bill didn't do those things if they knew him."

"Suffering cats!" groaned Barlow under his breath. "Maybe they just knew him by sight," he added aloud. "Of course they'd know Bill don't drink or gamble."

"Of course if they knew him at all they would understand," said the brother. "That is why I refused to talk to them. I was afraid they were up to some trick."

"If Mike could only hear this," muttered Barlow under his breath. "Come on, let's rustle up a big steak somewhere."

As they passed out of the hotel Goldman and Kellum watched them closely, seeming puzzled. Barlow nodded to them, but Burke kept on.

An hour later the pair returned to the hotel. Mike Terhune, worried and frowning, was standing in the lobby.

"Hello!" he said as Burke's brother and Barlow entered. "Holy salt mackerel, I'm glad you——"

He stopped and stared at Burke's brother.

"Oh," he said, "I thought you were Burke!"

"This is Burke's brother," said Barlow. "Mr. Burke, this is Mike Terhune, our manager. Mike, let me see you a minute."

He drew the manager aside before he could unclasp his hand from the grip of the molder, and said hurriedly:

"Burke slipped off to a Turkish bath. He didn't want his brother to know he had been drinking. He'll be straight as a string in the morning and fit to work two games. Don't give him away."

"Sure not," promised the manager, with a relieved sigh. "I was scared to death for fear he was drinking again. I hadn't any idea of tipping him off to his brother. Just wanted to scare him. I was afraid those sharks had got hold of him."

"What sharks?" inquired Barlow.

"Those two crooks, Goldman and Kellum. They came clear up here to bet on this series, and they don't care who wins, if they can make the right guess. They've started plunging on the Unicorns against us for to-morrow's game and for the series. Kendall is back of them, and I was afraid they had grabbed Burke and filled him up with wine to make sure he couldn't work."

"By George, I think you're right!" said Barlow. "Say, that's funny! Those two guys have been hanging around all evening trying to talk to Burke's brother. They think he is Burke, and they're puzzled stiff to figure out why he won't speak to them."

"I wonder—— Say, is this twin of Burke's game?"

"Don't know," said Barlow. "He don't drink or smoke and won't talk about anything except how good Burke is."

"Don't drink? That crabs it sure," said the manager. "If he only would——"

"Only would what?" demanded Barlow as the manager frowned and lapsed into deep thought.

"There's a chance to slip something over on these wise folks," said Terhune. "They think this fellow is Burke. If he only would go out with them, get stiff drunk, stay up with them all night, and keep them thinking he's Burke, they'd bet their heads off against us to-morrow, and Burke would be fresh as a daisy and give them the trimming of their lives."

"And he don't drink!" wailed Barlow.

"Let's ask him, anyhow," suggested Terhune. "He may be willing to do it for his brother."

Burke's brother listened to the softly couched suggestion with much bewilderment.

"But I never played poker in my life," he protested.

"All the better," said Terhune. "Beginners always win. They'll try to make you win. All you've got to do is to drink whatever they buy, and the worse you play poker the drunker they'll think you are. We've got to do this—for Burke's sake."

"I'd do anything for Bill's sake," said the brother. "But I don't like the taste of beer."

"Beer?" snorted Terhune. "Drink wine, champagne. You'll like that. All my fellows do—excepting Bill, of course; he hates it!"

"I'm glad of that," assented the brother. "If you think it will do any good I'll try."

"Thata boy," said Terhune. "Just pretend you're Bill. Let 'em buy wine. Get as drunk as you can, and pretend to be drunker. Then we'll bring Bill in and give 'em the surprise of their lives."

"Wink at 'em when you go out," suggested Barlow. "They're watching you, and they'll think you're pretending to keep away from them because you don't want us to see you with them."

Burke's brother, with some hesitation, strolled toward the door, gave a heavy wink toward the watching pair, and passed out of the hotel. Two minutes later Goldman and Kellum, after an elaborate pretense of indifference, followed.

It was eleven o'clock when Pitcher Burke, reclining luxuriously upon his cot in the Turkish bath, after a prolonged session in the hot room, followed by a cold plunge and a brisk rub, started up, winked, and beheld a spectacle that kept him winking and wondering whether he was dreaming or awake. Goldman and Kellum were struggling down the stairs and into the room, half carrying, half dragging Burke's brother.

"Here, help us with him," they called to the attendant. "He's all in. Get him undressed and on to a cot."

"Whew!" remarked Goldman. "That's the funniest one I ever ran against. I thought Burke could drink a bit. Four quarts—and he's dead to the world!"

"I never saw him go that way before," said Kellum. "Last time I was out with him he put every one to bed, and got mad because daylight came too soon."

"We made a good job of it to-night," responded Goldman, mopping his brow. "Kendall thought it would take a hundred to get him pickled and was willing for us to lose another century to him at poker. We can split that."

Pitcher Burke, huddled on his cot, overheard the dialogue. His impulse to spring from the cot and seek revenge abated slowly as he caught the drift of the plot. He realized that Goldman and Kellum had mistaken his brother for him and in some way had lured him on to drink. Plans for vengeance were rioting through his brain as he listened. He was struggling with the problem when Kendall, the plunger, entered the bathhouse.

"How did it work, boys?" he asked.

"Fine!" volunteered Goldman. "He must have been drinking before we got him. He swallowed a pint of wine as if it were water, and we had to drag him here. He is pickled."

"Sure he isn't playing possum?" asked Kendall, walking to the cot and inspecting the helpless twin.

"Possum, nothing," snorted Kellum. "He's spifflicated; loaded to the guards.

He can't pitch a decent game in the next week."

"I've got fifteen hundred dollars on at evens on the series, and two thousand dollars on to-morrow's game," soliloquized Kendall. "You boys stir around and pick up a few more bets. Ask odds for a time, but take anything offered at even money, either game or series. With Burke out it will be a cinch."

Burke, his brain grasping the full details of the plot, buried his face in the sheets and did some thinking.

The trio of plotters, after a final inspection of the helpless twin, departed to attend to nefarious business, and ten minutes later Pitcher Burke crept from his cot and began to don his brother's clothes. It was nearly midnight when Kendall, Goldman, and Kellum, having placed their money, were having a parting drink that Bill Burke, staggering and pretending intoxication, entered the barroom.

"Thought you had old Burkie laid out, eh?" he demanded jeeringly. "Jush sleepy, thash all. Had nap. C'm on, you, Goldman; buy some more wine."

"Better pour a few more bots into him and finish it up," suggested Kendall aside to Goldman. "Put him away right this time. Fix him so he won't be able to pitch even one game."

"Thought you'd get old Burkie soused, eh?" demanded Burke belligerently. "Old Burkie'll drink you all under. Le's get up a poker game."

"All right," agreed Kellum eagerly. "Let's organize. Let's take him upstairs and trim him right," he added aside to Goldman. "He has it coming."

Three hours later Goldman and Kellum, blinking half drunkenly, leered angrily at Burke, who was gathering in the checks.

"Get old Burkie drunk, eh?" he demanded for the hundredth time. "You're a fine pair to get any one drunk! C'm on, just another round of jacks and we'll all go bed."

"I'm goin' bed now," replied Goldman, blinking solemnly. "Got 'nough. Got keep c'ndish'n."

"'Nother pint wine, waiter," said Burke. "Lesh have 'nother little bottle 'fore we go."

It was five o'clock when Burke, triumphant, dragged Goldman and Kellum down the stairs at the Turkish-bath establishment and turned them over to the tender mercies of the attendants. Barlow was turning over for his beauty sleep in his bed at the hotel when Burke, haggard, weary, and triumphant, entered.

"Get Buck, the trainer, quick!" Burke ordered thickly. "Get some dope! Wow! I've had a night!"

"Stewed!" ejaculated Barlow, sitting up straight.

"Y'ought t' see the other fellows," chuckled Burke. "Laid away cold. Thought they could take my brother out and pump him full, eh? I fixed 'em! Won two hundred and sixty dollars of their money, let 'em buy wine all night, and stowed 'em away. Now I've got to get ready and pitch that game. Get Buck!"

An hour's work by Buck wrought wonders.

"Buck, I'm soused," confessed Burke. "Let me sleep one hour. If I sleep any longer I'm dead, and I've got to get out there. See! Wake me in an hour, then go to work. Don't let Terhune know."

He was snoring before the sentence was ended.

During the morning, while the trainer worked, Kendall was busy. The odds on the series dropped steadily, and at noon the betting was eight to five that the Unicorns would win. At noon Goldman and Kellum emerged from the baths after a parting glance at the still-snoring twin, and sat hating each other

and their breakfasts while they reported to Kendall.

"He's laid away again!" groaned Goldman. "He made us buy all the wine in town. But his goose is cooked. He won't even be able to put on a uniform."

"Terhune keeps saying Burke will pitch," said Kendall warily. "He either don't know about it, or he is stalling. I've placed all the money."

At three o'clock Kendall, Goldman, and Kellum paraded through the stands to their box seats. Ten minutes later Burke strolled across from the bench, and, as he passed, he winked toward them as he started to warm up.

"That fellow doesn't look as if he had lost an hour's sleep," complained Kendall. "What are you fellows doing —crossing me?"

"Crossing you?" replied Kellum. "Say, if his head feels like mine he can't move an arm."

"Wait till that wine gets stirred up," growled Goldman. "He swallowed more of it than I did, and I can't see the plate now."

Burke, keeping to the windward of Terhune on the bench, took another sip from the ammonia bottle, blinked back the tears, and trotted out to pitch. The stand was going around, and his head was splitting. For one inning he wavered, but escaped without a score being registered against him. The sun, beating down upon his head, seemed to set it boiling within. He was weary and his legs seemed leaden. Through seven innings of torture he pitched, and neither side had scored.

"Get a run for me, fellows," begged Burke between innings. "Get just one and we'll beat them."

His strength was going, his head was reeling, and his knees were shaking beneath him. Two or three times he felt himself going, but each time a glance at the box in which the trio of plotters was seated nerved him.

The ninth came, and Jorgens, with a terrific drive to left, sent home the first run of the game for the Battlers, and they took the field to finish the game. Burke's arm felt like lead. His head was whirling, and his eyes seemed to be pressed shut by the pain.

"One drink of booze, Mike," he pleaded. "Just one, and I'll last it out."

The trainer poured a decoction into the drinking cup and slipped it to him. Burke advanced to his position. The first batter drove a high fly to the outfield, and Burke breathed more easily. He knew his strength and cunning had gone. His head was buzzing from the drink. His arm felt powerless, and he strove in vain to make the ball obey his will. Two hits in succession put Unicorns on first and second, and the home crowd went into a frenzy of hope, cheering, screaming, shouting for another hit to tie or win the game.

"For Heaven's sake, Bill, put something on it!" begged Barlow. "They're floating up."

Gritting his teeth, Burke hurled the ball straight across the plate, and the batter, overanxious, rolled a slow bounder to first base and retired.

Runners were on second and third; a hit meant defeat. Burke was swaying as he stood on the slab. The shouts of the crowd seemed far away, and the grand stand appeared a haze in the far distance. Suddenly Barlow ran down from his position. The crowd, thinking he was going to consult his pitcher as to what ball to pitch, screamed deliriously.

"Your brother is coming into the stand," said Barlow. "Don't weaken!"

Burke blinked the mist from his eyes and looked. His twin brother, looking ill and forlorn, was just finding a seat in the front row. Burke's teeth snapped shut and his jaw hardened. He sent two fast balls whizzing over the plate for strikes. Barlow signaled, and Burke shook his head. Suddenly all the pain

had left his head. His eyes were clear, His arm felt strong.

"You've got to curve. You've got to curve!" he gritted, addressing the ball. "You've got to curve!"

Barlow, who has caught a thousand games, says he never saw a ball curve as that one did. It started shoulder high, flashed down and out. Merland, the mightiest batter of the Unicorns, slashed at the darting ball, missed it a foot, and the game was over.

That evening, in the hotel lobby, Burke's brother, standing with Burke and Barlow and Mike Terhune, told his story.

"Drink is a terrible thing!" said Terhune. "It's a good thing they got you instead of Bill."

"Yes," said the brother, "Bill never could have pitched as he did."

"It's a terrible thing!" said Bill, shaking his aching head. "I never will take a drink——"

And under his breath he added a fervent "Again!"

THE WONDERFUL FORTUNE TELLER

THE hero of this story is a high-strung Southern gentleman, called "Colonel" by all who know him. He is a familiar figure in the lobbies of the New York hotels, on the board walk at Atlantic City, and in New Orleans. He is courtly, brilliant, and handsome.

One day, after having partaken liberally of mint juleps mixed by efficient bartenders in Atlantic City, he took a stroll along the board walk. His attention was attracted by an Armenian fortune teller's sign. He went in and announced in his most dignified manner his desire to have thrust upon him the revelation of his future. Also, being entirely in command of his senses, he asked the cost of all the knowledge he was about to obtain.

"For two dollars," said the Armenian, with a low bow and in queer-sounding English, "I will tell you your fortune."

The colonel took off his hat, draped himself and his coat tails on a chair, extended his right hand, and asked for the whole truth. That fortune teller was a wonder. He knew the colonel inside out.

"Young man," said the colonel, when it was all over, "you have told me a wonderful fortune. I never heard of anything to equal what you have done. And I'm not going to give you two dollars. I'm going to give you twenty-five."

Six weeks later, when he was standing in the lobby of a New York hotel, a handsome young man walked up to him, grasped his hand, and said:

"Colonel, come and have a drink with me."

The colonel drew himself up proudly, and responded in a cool, not to say freezing, tone:

"Sir, I never drink with strangers."

"But we're not strangers," insisted the stranger.

"I beg your pardon," said the colonel.

"Oh, I know you," the young man assured him genially. "I was born in New Orleans just a block from your home."

Still the colonel looked perplexed. He did not drink with strangers, and he could not remember having known this young man.

"Furthermore," continued the young man pleasantly, "you paid me twenty-five dollars down on the Atlantic City board walk for telling your fortune."

"Ah!" said the colonel, with a profound bow. "With the understanding that I do know you now, let's have a drink."

The Road to Adventure

By Frank E. Evans

Author of "The Madness of Cranston," "In the Heart of the Fog," Etc.

One month of war; with El Latigo, the Whip—no soldier of fortune but a brave man forced out upon the Road to Adventure by the call of humanity—as the moving genius

CHAPTER I.

BY ORDER OF THE PRESIDENTE.

STOCKTON, whom his world has judged so harshly, is not one of the common, or beer-garden, soldiers of fortune who infest, with the tarantulas, and other pests, the black-and-tan republics of the Caribbean. He was, and still is, as superior to them in breeding and equipment as was the motive that impelled him into their ill-favored ranks. None of their trinity of recruiting sergeants—love of drink, lure of adventure, or lust of gold—could claim his enlistment. Least of all the last, for Stockton impassively tossed into the discard part ownership of the richest silver mine south of Old Mexico when he joined the alien legion.

It all began one morning at the main shaft of El Rio de Plata Mine, a scant ten leagues from Santander, capital of the republic of that name. Stockton, in gray flannel shirt, khaki riding breeches, and leather puttees, shaded his eyes beneath the brim of his panama to scan better a patch of faded blue about the shaft. As he trotted on, the patch showed as a squad of military. An officer advanced from it, slouchy of bearing, ragged of dress. As a military figure he was a sorry one, but to Stockton sinister enough, for he knew the army of Santander as a menace, not a bulwark. The officer parted his lips in a smile of greeting when the American swung out of saddle and dropped reins over the pony's head. The lips parted wider, disclosing yellow, broken fangs, and Stockton spat in disgust.

To his blunt, Anglo-Saxon mind the cavalryman was a breathing embodiment of Santander, his presence a token of its devious intrigues.

"Well, capitan, what brings you here?" and the slap of his riding crop on the leather puttees brought the shambling officer to a semblance of military bearing.

"By order of ze presidente zis mine he is cloased, señor."

"For two of the debased pesos of your noble presidente I'd chuck you and your bobtails down the shaft!" exploded Stockton rudely. "Pronto, now, what's the meaning of this military display?"

The straw hats of the detachment bobbed about them as the curious soldiery closed in.

"Ze señor is angry," the captain faltered. "He will then read ze orders."

From his belt he fished out an official document. In its mixture of military brevity and Latin grandiloquence was therein cited his authority to take over El Rio de Plata in the name of the republic of Santander and hold the same until the payment of twenty thousand dollars in gold into the treasury

of Santander had been certified. With timorous eyes and outspread hands the cavalryman assured him that he was but a humble instrument of his government. Stockton thrust the order into his shirt.

"But, señor, I must ask for ze orders back. Zey are government."

Stockton brushed aside two troopers who half heartedly barred his path, and was in saddle. Their leader ran to the pony's head, galvanized into action by the Anglo-Saxon's example.

"Hands off that bridle," snapped Stockton, "or I'll run you down. I'm going to take your presidente's orders to the palace at Santander and spank your valiant commander in chief with them. Adios!"

He was gone in a whirl of dust, and when he swung to the northward to hit the main trail to the capital he caught over his shoulder a glimpse of hats bobbing distractedly about, like straws in a mill race. Stockton's thoughts were hot as the white road over which he urged his beast. He had no more eyes for the beauties of its flanking scenery than he had respect for the authority of José Santos, president of Santander. Each successive time that the hard-won concession for El Rio de Plata had brought him in contact with that ruthless dictator, who banked in Madrid, and dreamed of mastery over a confederation of Central America, his distaste had deepened. Each time had come the insistent hint that the exorbitant percentage of Santander's share in its profits was held too low. That the closing of the mine was due to his studied failure to enrich further the war chest, Stockton easily surmised. Santos had, in thinly veiled words, threatened as much at their last meeting. At the recollection his face flushed, and he mechanically laid a rein over the pony's neck, swerving him off to the right of the road.

CHAPTER II.

FLOUTED AUTHORITY.

The hacienda of Emilio Selva, his nearest neighbor, and proved friend, showed white interspaces through the avenue of royal palms. Selva also was an adherent of José Santos, and might advise him well before he had his audience at the palace. No smoke was curling, as usual, from the detached wing where the kitchens were. Another turn in the winding avenue brought him to the front, and there, lounging in slovenly postures, were the faded blue-and-white-uniformed foot troops of Santander. The sight affected him as the apparition of ill-omened birds, and his hand trembled this time when he tossed reins over the pony's ears. The detachment straggled to its feet in a brave show of interest, and a squat officer came forward. Stockton appraised him, and smiled grimly. Civilian and alien that he was, he knew his mastery over him and his ragged infantrymen, and he shot out his questions fiercely.

"Señor Selva"—again deprecatory shrugs and outspread palms—"three days ago he receive summons to Santander. Business, politics, quién sabe?" The shoulders lifted with Latin eloquence.

"And the Señora Selva?"

"The señora leave next day. She go also with escort of cavalry."

"Where?"

"Perhaps it is to ze palacio. José Santos he gallant man. He fond of ze beautiful ladies. Quién sabe?" and he leered evilly.

The riding crop dropped heavily on his face, and Stockton was well up the avenue before the ragged fusillade of shots clipped through the palms overhead. Heedless of pursuit, he gained the road to the capital, his mind perturbed with surmises over the absence of the Selvas. Again came the

recollection of his last meeting with José Santos, for it had been at Selva's hacienda. Just three weeks before, Selva and the Doña Soledad had returned to it from their honeymoon. He had been invited to the reunion of the wedding party. Santos had, according to the custom of the country, acted as best man at the wedding, and was a much courted guest of honor that evening. With the remembrance of that custom, Stockton gladly dismissed the leering face of the squat cavalryman and his evil innuendo.

What a welcome break in the monotony of his mining routine the wedding and reunion had been! Doña Soledad—what sprightly interest she had shown in the fortunes of her neighbor, what gracious hospitality she had extended to him, alien, of a race despised in Santander! His feelings toward Santander had mellowed under her kindness, only to become case-hardened at sight of the despoiled hacienda. He remembered the words of José Santos when he had commented on the charm of Selva's bride:

"Si, Señor Stockton, the little Soledad left our country in short dresses, and I had not seen her again until the day of the wedding. In her you see how a Madrid convent and a Parisian frock finish the native beauty of Santander. And, Señor Stockton, I hear that your Rio de Plata is turning out the ore in a veritable stream of silver. I fear that the government held that concession too cheaply."

Straight through the cobbled streets of the capital he rode, and drew rein only at the Plaza de Palacio. Barefooted sentries passed him up the palace steps without challenge. The aid on duty sauntered over to ask his errand, but Stockton nodded gruffly and pushed his way through the door that opened on the president's official room.

José Santos looked up in surprise from a sheaf of papers on his flat-topped desk. Under a mop of bristling white hair, his eyes, black as the obsidian rock from which Santander's men centuries past had shaped arrowheads and javelins, keen as the razor edge to which they had ground them, took in the evidences of Stockton's forced ride. A jeweled hand brushed back the military sweep of his white mustaches until they bristled afresh. When he spoke, his voice was feline, purring, in silken contrast to the flinty eyes.

"May I ask, Señor Stockton, to what I owe this so un-looked for pleasure? I had fancied you hard at work in the rich galleries of El Rio de Plata."

For answer the mining engineer thrust his hand into his wet, clinging shirt, and tossed Santos' confiscatory orders on his desk. Santos' eyes watched it flutter among his correspondence, and then sparks flashed from their hard depths, for the butt of the riding whip crashed down on it.

"That for you and your orders, Santos! I serve notice on you that you and I will stand by our original terms. You may work this 'stick-up-man's' game on some mine owners, but call off your ragtag soldados from my property, or I'll plug up the shaft with them."

This time the obsidian eyes betrayed no more emotion than the mask which slipped so quickly over the brown face. The words came with the vibratory pur of a house tabby:

"Pardon, señor, I fear your so hard ride in the sun has been too much. You will sit down, and we will talk as friends? No? As you wish, señor. I have the great admiration for you Yankees of the North. Santa Maria! but would one of Santander's men stride into my office, pound my desk with the end of the riding whip, and flout my authority?" He laughed at the whimsical idea, a laugh dry and thin as a jungle stream in the dry season. In his eyes had crept a light new to them,

the outward sign of a tribute such as few men had wrested from the old soldier's glance.

"You speak of your love for the Yankees. What of Cross, the mining prospector, and Leroy, the rubber planter, whom your firing squad murdered at six paces at Las Cascadas last month?"

"You forget"—and into the soft voice crept the assurance of the autocrat—"that Señores Cross and Leroy were caught by my troops in an attempt to blow up a government troopship on the Rio San Juan."

"As a protest against the high-handed, ruthless treatment they had received," rejoined Stockton.

"We will pass that by, señor. What is done is done. I am now to do what has not before been done in Santander. The man who rushes into my office, throws my orders before me, and pounds my desk—my new desk from Paris—with his whip: he is to know what José Santos thinks of a brave man. Here, señor"—and his pen raced across the face of the order—"is the assurance of José Santos that El Rio de Plata shall not be disturbed. It is my word. Peste! Had I men like you in the field, El Tigre, the old fiend, would soon be flying over the frontier to Guadalupe with his army of liberation. Army of liberation! Army of deliberation, with the old dolt idle on his haunches since the rains stopped. Toribio, with his rubber acres; Alvarez, with his mines; Selva, with his sugar lands, would they have protested so? Oh, no, señor, of a great certainty no," and again Santos indulged in his dry mirth.

"And what of Señor Selva? Has he been here?"

The face went masklike again, and Santos rose and handed the orders back to the American, to signify that the audience was over.

"I have not seen him, señor."

The crack of a pistol shot rang like a muffled bell in the room, and Stockton turned toward the plaza.

"Another dog, señor. My men have orders to clear the streets of the capital of them. Adios, Señor Stockton, and may you go with God!"

Still mystified by the unexpected reception of his defiance, the quaint Castilian benediction of parting in his mind, Stockton failed to hear the slither of hurrying feet in the plaza. When he stepped into its heat-tortured glare it was deserted. Just below him, on the white steps of the building that stood for government in Santander, a pool of blood was browning in the sun. An old woman shuffled into the plaza and hurried past him, crossing herself zealously. Stockton heard her mutter in awed tones, as though she was finishing a gruesome tale to a hushed circle.

For a moment he wondered at the old crone, then led his tired pony across the plaza to the American legation. Here he might have news of Selva and Doña Soledad, and a glimpse at the late papers from the States before he returned to the mine with the canceled orders.

CHAPTER III.

THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY.

Outwardly there was but the flag, in limp embrace of the staff, to distinguish it from the dwelling of a Santander patrician. Behind the grilled gates, topped inappropriately with stone lions, he glimpsed the patio, cool and restful. Graceful columns bared white traceries of marble against the profusion of hanging baskets filled with air plants. Palms rose lancelike from stone urns. Water cascaded in crystal tones from basin to basin of the pagodalike fountain, and above the broad flags of the court a stone-railed gallery made deep shade. Yet to Stockton its exotic cloak was nothing. To him it was but the framing of the only bit of American soil in all Santander.

He breathed deeply as he crossed the stone flags, as one might after leaving Santander's miasmatic lowlands to gain the pure air of its savanna country. Kelton, the military attaché, wiry and yellow-mustached—as every cavalryman should be—welcomed him with a goblet, thin-stemmed, and filled with cunningly flavored rum of the country. Stockton sank back in the wicker chair opposite and stretched his dusty legs in the straight line of comfort.

"Well, 'glad to see you aboard,' as the sea serpents of the navy say. How's the mine coming on? Running out double eagles with the dates all stamped?"

Stockton smiled, and handed the canceled orders of Santos to the cavalryman. As he went on with his recital of the morning's happenings Kelton whistled his surprise or pounded his knee in sheer enjoyment. At the stage where he told of leaving the main trail to seek the counsel of Selva, Kelton's lips parted to interrupt. Stockton paused to give him the opening, but the lips closed in a straight line, and Kelton shook his head thoughtfully. At its end he whistled in the eloquent tribute of the schoolboy that was still strong in his nature, and then, cavalrymanlike, buried his yellow mustache in the goblet. His eyes swept across the rim of it to where the patio lay green and white in the sun, and he began slowly:

"Then you have had no further news of Selva—and the Doña Soledad?"

"Not a word since I left the hacienda." He saw that Kelton's eyes were not on him, and a quick fear prompted him to sit bolt upright and demand: "Tell me, man! What is it?"

Kelton's hand went to the stem of the goblet, spinning it about with maddening deliberation before he raised his eyes. "Señor Selva," he said, "shot himself through the heart on the steps of the palace ten minutes ago. You must have been inside laying down the law to Santos at the very time."

"And the Doña Soledad?"

"She, rest her gentle soul, killed herself in the women's quarters of the palace two days ago."

The stem of the goblet snapped in the tightening fingers. Before the broken pieces had stilled their crash on the broad flags Stockton had changed from a serious-minded mining engineer to a hot-headed revolutionist. There was a touch of steel in his voice when he broke the silence that had fallen on the patio, but he only said: "I heard that shot. Santos, whom I was just beginning to find human, said it was probably a dog." The words of the old crone swept back over him, as undertow passing over a wearied swimmer, and with them the whole ugly truth: "On the very steps of the palacio he killed himself, brave caballero! Noble protest!"

"We—we wouldn't avenge the abduction and death of our bride that way, would we, Kelton?" he laughed hysterically. "They do those things differently under the Southern Cross. No wonder I've always thought it a poor apology for the honest old Dipper that swings in northern skies. Customs of the country! Curse their customs!"

CHAPTER IV.

WAR PLANS.

Kelton clapped his hands, and a *mozo* came with fresh goblets and silver pitcher. Stockton waved it aside. "Could I have a straight toddy of rum this time?" he asked huskily. "Long, dusty ride, hot sun—sort of played out." They talked for a while, mostly in monosyllables, and Stockton asked abruptly: "How much longer is that devil, with the eyes of a snake and the fingers of a woman, going to murder Americans and ravish the women of his land?"

"Until the United States government is forced to step in, or old El Tigre gets the upper hand," was the terse reply. "Frankly, and for your own knowledge, it wouldn't take much more to arouse Washington. The Cross and Leroy shooting was the worst break Santos has made in a long time. When they do move they'll send an expedition of marines down here to clean up this mess with neatness and dispatch."

"By 'much more' you mean what?" persisted Stockton.

Kelton studied the new tenseness of his cheek line and the febrile light of his slate-blue eyes before he threw his trim shoulders back in response to a quick decision. And Stockton hung on his carefully weighed words as a sick man would give undivided attention to the import of a surgeon's death sentence.

"If the scattered forces under El Tigre, for instance, should drop their petty forays," Kelton outlined crisply, "concentrate, and pay some attention to their employment of artillery, the old chap could launch a campaign that would bring the marines down hotfoot in sixty days. As it is, he's wasting this good weather for campaigning, and when he does fight he launches his ill-armed troops into the mêlée without first hammering away with artillery to cloak the real assault. He might, if it was pointed out to him, cripple the railroad, destroy all communication to the coast by rail and telegraph, get his needed ordnance by the simple method of taking it away from the government forces, seize the cable station at San Juan del Sur, and by his acts proclaim to all interested parties that the recognized government of Santander was worth about thirty cents Mexican. How long do you think Washington would leave the broken reins in Santos' hands if all that came to pass, one thing quick on the heels of another?"

"I wish I had been trained as you, Kelton."

"Nonsense! You're an engineer. That's the best equipment for such a campaign. But I've no business talking this way. I'm a noncombatant by all the rules of the book." Kelton smiled quizzically. "A soldier can't get away from his trade, any more than a man traveling for a shoe house can help talking lasts and uppers. I like to keep in war-college trim planning these little campaigns down here. It's just as much fun, too, Stockton, to turn about and plan the defensive campaign to meet the offensive one I've just outlined to you. It helps a man on the offense wonderfully. He's bound then to anticipate what might otherwise knock his carefully prepared plans into a cocked hat. For instance, if I were Santos, and fencing off intervention, I'd make use of another set of plans I've filed away in my office."

"How does it go?"

Kelton chose to ignore the pleading greed in the query, but sat and chewed the tips of his yellow mustache. About his eyes Stockton noted for the first time the many threadlike lines spreading like a mesh about the heavy eyebrows, multiplying as the soldier applied himself to some new mental problem. The threads were the hall mark of tropical service, spun on the looms of our colonial possessions, and Stockton was destined to have them creep, myriadlike, about his slate-blue eyes, as the vines wind about the trees of the jungle.

"Excuse me a moment," said Kelton, and crossed the patio. He was back again with a leather portfolio under his arm, and Stockton's eyes glistened. "My little war game," he explained. "Here," and he spread a paper before the mining engineer, "is a detailed plan of assault that would take the arsenal at Matachin without the loss of a corporal's guard. It's simple as an end run

in football, and it would give El Tigre arms and ammunition for the heavy work to follow, before the old chap scores his touchdown with the capture of the cable station. Here," and he selected a blue print, "is the modern way of demolishing bridges and aqueducts. The others—well, you're an engineer, and blue prints and sketches ought to be plain as day to you. You might amuse yourself looking over them in my office. I'll be busy with the minister for at least an hour. And, by the way, Stockton, if you want any writing material or drawing instruments," he paused so long that Stockton moved uneasily in his chair, "you'll find them in my desk. I know you won't read any of my love letters. Just snap the lock on the portfolio when you have—when you are through with it."

A tiny drumbeat was tapping, tapping insistently in the back of Stockton's head, in unison to the brisk stride of Kelton marching away under the shade of the gallery. His hands trembled as he picked up the portfolio and crossed to Kelton's office.

CHAPTER V.

THE AUDACIOUS ASSAULT.

An hour later Stockton filed a code message to his New York office and drew his balance from the Banco Nacionale. El Tigre, he knew, was operating near the junction of the San Juan and the Chepo, and at dusk he pulled in his game pony at the outposts of the army of liberation.

A sergeant led him to a hut on the bank of the Chepo, with woven roof of grass, and sides of corrugated iron. From a staff above drooped a flag of red and yellow, and a vagrant wind tossed it out and showed a rising sun sewn in its center, proclaiming the headquarters of El Tigre.

A soldierly man, in the sixties, stood within the door, white imperial and mustaches vivid against a face tanned to the color of the dirt floor behind him. El Tigre crooked a finger to an officer with a red sash wound about his sword belt, and Stockton followed the two inside the hut. They listened with imperturbable faces to his proffer of services, but casual mention of a set of campaign plans, drawn by a nameless expert in the magic art of war, elicited their undisguised interest.

Stockton watched their faces attentively as they bent over the children of Kelton's trained mind. In the flickering light of the candles he could see their eyes glint with approval, and once or twice a rare smile crease the dark cheek of El Tigre. Late into the night they talked and planned, and messengers loped off on jungle paths with orders to detached garrisons to concentrate at a rendezvous close to Matachin.

Stockton slept like a hibernating bear that night, despite the vengeful buzzing of mosquitoes outside the net spread above his hammock, the occasional forays of gnats through its meshes, the whinnying of ponies picketed outside the lines.

The thin notes of a bugle began his first day as a soldier of fortune. Ranged alongside El Tigre and his chief of staff, he watched the column take up its march. Ragged and ill-armed, the army of liberation detached itself from its month-old bivouac with a celerity that astonished him. Troop after troop filed by, ebony faces flashing in smiles as they saluted El Tigre. Many of their mounts were piebald, all were equally sad-faced, rat-tailed, and skinny, and Stockton's blooded pony neighed his derision.

Some of the troopers wore white cotton shirts outside blue dungaree trousers. Others attained unintended variety by reversing the colors. The straw sombrero of the country would have been official headgear for the column but for a liberal scattering of forage

caps. The discarded rifles of continental armies were slung about their shoulders by knotted cords, and tarred loops did service as sword belts for the machetes hung at their waists. The officers affected the loose white shirt and duck trousers of the planter. They alone, of all the army of liberation, achieved the distinction of shoes.

Midway of the column lumbered ox teams, hauling the bulk of supplies and the two field guns. One wagon groaned by on three wheels of solid wood and a discarded artillery caisson wheel. With point and flankers and rear guard—a leaf out of the portfolio—the column passed, and they spurred on their mounts to take their places in it. Stockton rode without arms, unless his riding crop might be classified as a weapon, and before nightfall he was known to the rank and file of the army of liberation by the sobriquet, unforgettable, of El Latigo—The Whip.

In the six weeks that followed, the whirlwind campaign that filtered to the hut on the Chepo River from the legation at the capital worked with the smooth moving of chessmen in the hands of a master. An audacious assault on the slovenly guarded arsenal at Matachin yielded to the rejuvenated army of liberation its desperately needed artillery and shell. The narrow-gauge line of the Ferro Carril de Santander was pierced at strategic points. Its bridges crumpled into the river beds below to the shock of explosives. Along the right of way locomotives lay on their sides, with the letters F. C. de S. blistering under the flaming skies, and the lianas of the greedy jungle draped tenaciously about the huge bell-flared stacks. The crooked telegraph poles, set at drunken angles along the line, hummed no more to the sending and receiving of messages. Their cut wires left communication with the coast and the world beyond to the cable station at San Juan del Sur.

Then, one misty morning, El Tigre's batteries launched their sobbing shell at its cluster of low-lying buildings. Before the demoralized garrison could respond to the puffs at the jungle's fringe two troops of desperate men, black, yellow, and white, burst out from the cover of a flanking cane field. Stockton, waving his riding crop above his head, led them on in an irresistible charge. One message flashed over the captured cable, a laconic one to New Orleans, and within the hour Washington knew that El Latigo had wrested it from José Santos, and that the flag of El Tigre was flying above the coast village.

The cable thrilled no more with news from harassed Santander, and Washington read the latest dispatches from the legation with a new determination. the lively curiosity of the Latin American colony at Washington as to the identity of El Latigo was quickened by its meager information. Six weeks had placed the name high on the rolls of the soldiers of fortune who had raced with devastation over their lands. With his advent into the arena, the army of liberation had shattered tradition with thunderbolt assaults at dawn; with its scientific demolition of governmental communications; its uncanny fashion of disappearing like a phantom army from one harassed quarter to deal a blow the next day in some unguarded quarter; in its tireless, crushing attacks on the forces of José Santos.

The name of El Latigo, at first linked timorously with that of the redoubtable El Tigre, had swept across Santander like a blight.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VULTURE.

It was just lacking sixty days from the death of Emilio Selva and his bride, Doña Soledad, when the drab port of San Juan del Sur echoed to the rush of the port bow anchor of the U. S. S.

Buccaneer. Electric cranes swung outboard with launches and cutters. White figures swarmed down the boat-boom ladders into them. Coxswains made fast their cutters to the bitts of the launches, and the boats edged up to the gangways. Men in khaki, carrying rifles and the crossed slings of haversacks and canteens, took their places in the thwarts in an orderly, endless stream, and the bluejackets in the bows stripped the tarpaulins from the rapid-firers.

Stockton, from his seat under the veranda of San Juan del Sur's only hotel, turned with a laugh to a fellow American.

"The marines have come, and our sixty days are not yet up. José Santos will be in Madrid within a fortnight, Murray."

Murray, born soldier of fortune, fished a blue packet of cigarettes out of his pocket and puffed reflectively before he answered:

"Yes, here come the 'Johnnies on the Spot,' and our work is over. You, I take it, will go back to your mine, and grow rich and respectable."

"I hope so. I'll have a pile of work cut out for me, now that my soldiering days are over. El Rio de Plata will be worth more than ever now, with Santos out of the saddle."

Like a vision came the realization that the nearest hacienda would no longer shelter Selva and Doña Soledad, and he ended abruptly. Murray lighted a second cigarette from the smoldering end in his fingers.

"There's promise of a lively time over in Guadalupe," he began slowly, watching Stockton appraisively out of the tail of his eye. "They need some good men there, Stockton, and there'll be some fat pickings at the end of it. Met one of Corral's agents here this morning. He's keen to have you, on any terms."

Stockton, eyes fixed on the boats making for the snaky pier, laughed contentedly. His duty beckoned clearly to him. "Flattering, but I've had enough. I'm not exactly a soldier man, you see. I got drawn into this campaign just by impulse—personal matter. The way they do things down here got on my nerves. I've squared that account, and I'm going back to the mine."

A squad of vultures, half hopping, half flying in the can and bottle-littered road, rose in clumsy flight as Murray flipped his cigarette among them.

"I understand, old man. You've got the right dope. This soldiering hasn't bitten under your skin too deeply. You're lucky to quit with the gilt-edged reputation you've made. Those vultures out there, the efficient scavenger force of this lovely hole, just reminded me of the man who is ruling Guadalupe now. They call him El Buitre—The Vulture. Pretty name but none too good for him. Corral's agent was telling me last night about his latest bit of deviltry. Seems he gave a ball at the capital last month. Flower and chivalry of Guadalupe. Laid his senile eyes for the first time on young girl. Old family, convent-bred. You know the kind."

"Yes," said Stockton; "the only good thing that comes out of these flea-bitten lands."

"Arrested her father next day. Trumped-up charge. Threw him in jail. Girl disappeared. Father served on El Buitre's staff through four revolutions. Girl apple of his eye."

Stockton listened, eyes held seaward, to the bitten-off sentences.

"They sing a ballad about it now in Guadalupe," Murray chanted on relentlessly. "Pathetic ballad. Usual Spanish play of words on girl's name. You know, Spanish for solitude."

"Soledad," said Stockton.

In critical silence they watched the

marines disembark from the line of cutters and fall into battalion formation. Sharp orders broke the somnolence of the water front, and the rhythmic swing of trained men sent the white dust upward in tremulous stratas.

"Where's this agent of Corral's hanging out?"

"Thought you were going back to the mine?"

"I've changed my mind. I'd like to help clip the wings of The Vulture."

In the next issue we will begin publication of a great four-part story by Francis Lynde called "The Unscrambling of the T. C. R." Don't fail to get the first September number, on sale August 7th.

CUPID AND CUPIDITY

A BURLY little nigger went to the county clerk's office in Dallas and obtained a marriage license. A week later he came back and asked to have another name substituted for the bride's.

"I done changed mah mind," he declared, with a grin.

The clerk nodded, and remarked perfunctorily that it would cost him another dollar and a half.

"You mean I got to get me a new license, cap?"

"That's what I mean."

"Gee," said the applicant suddenly grave. He thought hard for a moment. Then, with an air of settled determination: "Say, boss, never you mind. This ol' one will do. There ain't a dollar and a half difference between them niggers nohow."

SAVING THE FAMILY'S REPUTATION

AT a banquet of the ministers of New York, Doctor Johnston, of the Morrisania Church, told this story:

"One of the members of my church has instilled into his family the belief that the collection is a vitally important part of the service.

"Consequently his little boy Thomas never comes to church without his contribution.

"One Sunday, as the elders began to take up the collection at the morning service, Thomas looked along the pew to see if the various members of the family were provided with a contribution.

"Noticing a guest of his sister's empty-handed, he whispered:

"'Where is your money?'

"'I have none,' was the reply.

"Time was short and the necessity great. In a flash the little fellow met the emergency by saying:

"'Here—take mine. That'll pay for you, and I'll get under the seat.'

"And, flinging his own coin into her lap, he disappeared under the pew, where he remained until the elder had gone by—and the reputation of the family was saved."

The Cowboy's Lament

For this quaint version of "The Cowboy's Lament" we are indebted to Mr. C. R. Fish, of Kettle Falls, Wash. Mr. Fish is an old range rider, and he says he used to sing the "Lament" thirty years ago. The newer version, beginning "Oh, bury me not on the lone prairie" we published in a former issue of the POPULAR If, as B. M. Bower said about "The Lone Prairie," the cowboys "sang it with a twinkle in the eyes and a quirk of the lips to prove that the humor was not lost upon them," we can easily imagine that the old-timers took even less seriously the lugubrious "Lament" which Fish and his "pardners" sang.

OH, it was down to Luther's barroom,
To Luther's barroom so early one morn,
There lay a young cowboy all dressed in white linen,
All dressed in white linen but dressed for the grave.

CHORUS.

Then play the fife slowly
And beat the drum lowly,
Play the dead march as they carry me on.
Take me to the graveyard and lay the sod o'er me
For I'm a young cowboy and know I've done wrong.

When once in the saddle I used to be dashing,
When once in the saddle I used to be gay;
I first took to drinking and then to card playing,
Got shot through the heart—and now to the grave.
(*Chorus.*)

Then, Willie, go fetch me a crowd of gay cowboys,
A crowd of gay cowboys the cowboy did say.
Tell each and tell all that they must take warning
And repent their wild ways before it's too late.
(*Chorus.*)

Then, Willie, go fetch me a cup of cold water,
A cup of cold water the cowboy said;
But ere I returned his spirit had left him,
He had gone to his Savior. The cowboy was dead.
(*Chorus.*)

The Man Who Disappeared

By Richard Washburn Child

Author of "The Blue Wall," "Jim Hands," Etc.

VIII.—A MATTER OF MINUTES

JENNY HORN thought that she should learn to sew. Her life had been one of so great an activity in earning a living by her wits, and in keeping out of the hands of the police, that sewing had never occurred to her. Now, however, when she had been married, by the help of John Perriton, she had a feeling that a needle and thread would create a domestic atmosphere.

She and Henry Horn were still occupying the room in the boarding house where John had formerly lived, but from which, since his meeting with Nelson Wales, he had been forced to go, once more a hunted man. On this morning Jenny was bending over her sewing, and waiting for the hour to come when she was to meet him at one of the parkway gates. During the time when, having made his escape from the police who pursued him for the crime of which Nelson Wales was guilty, he had been thought to be dead, Jenny had spent most of her consideration of him in planning ways to prove his innocence to Mary Wales. Now, however, she was weighing the advisability of John's staying in the city, instead of trying to make his escape, when, in all probability, Nelson Wales had notified the police, and inspectors would be watching at every station and steamship dock.

Jenny had just made up her mind to put down her sewing and speak to her husband, who was in the next room, about planning a method of taking John out of the city by using a motor car, when there came a timid knock upon the door, and, after Jenny's invitation to open it, she found herself looking into the face of a beautiful young woman, and realized that for the first time in her life she was seeing John's sweetheart.

"I have come at the earliest possible moment, and I do not think I have been followed," said Mary Wales, closing the door after her with a trembling hand. "I have come to warn John that they are pursuing him. I have come for a word with him, for now I know that he is not guilty, and that I must ask for his forgiveness."

Jenny, always cautious, always suspicious of a trap, for a moment searched the eyes of the other woman, to be sure that the emotion which appeared in them was sincere. In that moment Mary reached out for the other's hand, and said: "You need not fear me. I will always be friendly to the woman whom John has made his wife."

"Wife!" shrieked Jenny. "I ain't ever been anything but a friend to him! I ain't his wife," and then, turning toward the door leading into the other room, she called out: "Henry, come in here! Here's a lady who claims that some other man is your wife's husband!"

In Jenny's statement, in her voice, and in her face, there was so much that

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was convincing; and in Henry Horn's amused attitude there was so much that confirmed that conviction, that Mary Wales, suddenly realizing that the man she had once promised to marry not only was not guilty of crime, but was still unmarried, and might belong to her, dropped into the nearest chair and cried softly in her joy.

"If you want to see John," said Jenny, "why don't you write a note to him? and I will see that he has it to-day. The last place that they would ever watch for him would be at Briarwood, and if there is some place where you can meet him there to-night, Henry and I would see that he was taken there, and gets out of the city without being nabbed."

"There is a lodge keeper's cottage," said Mary, looking up through her tears. "It is deserted now, and if my brother is not at home, I could meet him there. I have not spoken to my brother since I have known the truth about him, and because everything is unsettled, I do not know any of his plans."

She thought a moment, and then she wrote this message to John:

Since the meeting face to face with you and my brother, I know that it is he and not you who are guilty of the burglary and murder of our butler. Nevertheless, my brother would accuse you, and has notified the police to watch every station and steamship dock. Meet me at the old farmer's cottage at Briarwood, at eight to-night. I am more miserable than I can tell you.

"You are sure that he will get this note?" said Mary Wales.

"I know that he will get it," said Jenny.

"More than that, I know that he will be there," added Henry Horn.

Henry Horn was right.

No doubt he would have been glad to have been wrong had he been able to see, as dusk was gathering about the Wales' Briarwood estate, Mary walking up and down on the brick-paved terrace above the garden, watching with apprehension her brother coming across the fields.

She had not expected him to return to their home, and knowing him, as she now knew him, she refused to welcome him, and turned her back upon him as he came up the steps and gave some directions to the servant who met him at the door.

If it had not been for her appointed meeting with John, she would have fled from her own house, rather than spend a night under the same roof with Nelson Wales. Now, however, her only anxiety was to evade his observation when she covertly left the house to cross the fields toward the lodge keeper's cottage. She knew that the hour would soon come when John would meet her there, and she prayed for the cover of night to shut down before that time came.

Thinking of means to divert suspicion, she called to one of the maids that she was going to retire. Her brother, she knew, was watching her from the library window, and she hoped, by going to her room, to avoid that keen observation with which he, as if he suspected the truth about her feelings toward John, had watched her ever since the night that she had discovered that Perriton was innocent.

The very fact, however, of her retiring so early, coupled with the great pointedness with which she gave her orders to the servants, made Nelson draw his eyelids down, and brought to his face an expression of cunning.

"Something is in the wind," said he to himself. "I believe that my sister is in communication with Perriton."

A few minutes later, at a time when the whippoorwills had begun to sing their monotonous night melody in the woods beyond the grove, Wales pressed the bell which called the maid, and when she came in looked up with a threatening scowl.

"Miss Mary has gone to her room,"

said he. "What's the matter? Answer me!"

"Yes, sir," said the poor girl.

He turned on the electric light, and saw that her stupid face was red with embarrassment and fright.

"And is she still in her room?" he inquired sharply.

"No, sir," said the maid. "She ain't there."

"And where has she gone?"

"I don't know, so help me!" came the reply. "She put on a long cloak and has gone across the fields."

"Ah!" said Wales to himself. "Very well. That is all. You may go."

She had not more than turned her back before he began pulling open the drawers of the desk, until he found the revolver which his father had for years kept under his pillow at night, and which, indeed, was there when he had died.

With this weapon in the breast pocket of his coat, he ran out onto the terrace and looked about at the clumps of trees and open fields which stretch over to the next estate. The flicker of a white figure moving through the night started him through daisies, clover, and grass in pursuit. When he had reached a little grove of pines, and had moved about cautiously, so that he might see who it was whose figure he had discerned, and when that figure had come out into the gray light of the evening, and he was able to identify it as that of his sister, he became a skulking shadow, which moved unseen, taking advantage of such concealment as occasional bushes and clumps of trees afforded.

It was not long before he could see that the destination of his sister was the deserted farmer's cottage at the end of the road, which had fallen into disuse since the county commissioners had moved the old highway. Indeed, when he had come to a rise in the ground, he saw that his sister had stopped a few hundred feet from the little, low building, and that, at the moment she did so, a little flicker of light appeared from one of the windows, as if some one within had struck a match.

"I may be able to bag my game," said Wales to himself. "I admire his nerve for coming here."

When he looked up once more from a glance which he had taken at his revolver, he could no longer see the figure of his sister, and knew that now he might safely draw near the lodge keeper's cottage, with its broken-in roof, its dilapidated blinds, and its broken-paned windows. Lilac bushes grew in profusion behind this house, and screened by them he approached the old stone wall of the structure, on the other side of which he believed his quarry was waiting.

Behind this wall, John Perriton, standing in the dark, had just seen the figure of Mary Wales outlined against the purple sky of night in the doorway, and had called her name softly. She had come toward him in the dark, reaching with both of her hands, and now they stood facing each other without speaking, and until her eyes had become accustomed to the gloom of the interior, which was even darker than the night without.

"You are in danger," said she. "I must talk of that first. It is hard for me to even speak his name, but my brother, against my testimony, and against yours, would have that of himself, the servants, and all the circumstantial evidence with which to send you to the electric chair. You must get away from this part of the country at once!"

"And leave you?" said John, in a voice filled with emotion.

"Yes, yes!" she replied. "When I can, I will join you in any part of the world, for as long a time——"

"For always?" he asked.

"Yes, for always," said she. And for the first time her lips met his.

"You must sit down," said John. "You have been through too much. You are shaking like a leaf. Here is an old settee."

He led Mary toward the corner, and stood facing her for a moment without speaking.

In this moment, raising her eyes, she saw framed in the lower pane of the window a face. She did not recognize it as that of her brother, but knew that it represented a menace. Whatever had been the nervous shocks to which she had been subjected since the memorable night when the butler was killed at Briarwood, she had come from stock which had been characterized by coolness of thought and steady nerve. Now, accordingly, in a low voice, she whispered words of warning to Perriton.

"Do not turn," said she. "A man is looking in the window at us. The panes are so dirty that I cannot tell who it is. We need all our presence of mind so that if it is any one after you you may make your escape."

John did not move. He merely laughed softly, and said: "This is quite in keeping with my recent experiences. It is an adventure, and it is an adventure of bad luck."

The man outside, however, decided the question of action. With a smart blow he broke in the glass, and the old window sash, under the impact, fell forward out of its frame. The man leaped into the opening, with one knee upon the sill.

Mary and Perriton, who had turned around, recognized Nelson Wales. They saw, too, the glint of the revolver in his hand.

"Don't move!" said he. "If you try to escape, I will fill you with lead! You will walk back to the house with me, where I shall telephone to the police."

"All right," said John, thinking quickly. "I give in."

But Mary Wales' mind had acted more rapidly than his own. Suddenly she leaped in front of him, so that now the barrel of the revolver was aimed at her back.

"See now!" she taunted her brother. "And John, you move toward the door, for I will keep between you and that gun!"

Nelson Wales uttered an oath. He tried to extricate himself from the window frame so that he might head off John's escape from the front of the cottage. In the struggle the revolver fell from his hand into the lilac bush beneath the window, and he fell forward from the window sill into the room, sprawling on the floor at the feet of his sister.

"Now that we are alone," said she, "I want to tell you that, though you be my brother, I will cause your arrest and your disgrace if you attempt to leave this room. After to-night I never want to see your face again."

For five minutes the two, brother and sister, stood facing each other, without words, and then Mary Wales followed Nelson across the fields toward Briarwood. The moon had come up, and she could see the figure which now caused only misery and loathing in her heart.

The hot sun was shining in the library windows of Briarwood when Mary came downstairs the following morning. She had expected to find that her brother had gone. She had spent a sleepless night in a new attempt to adjust herself to the inevitable belief that he was a criminal, that from small misdeeds he had gone to the most serious crime which a man can do. She had endeavored to decide from the point of view of duty and expediency whether she should accuse him of those crimes at once.

Evidently this was what Nelson had feared, for he was waiting for her, and

immediately came toward her with his insinuating, plausible smile.

"Do not come near me!" she exclaimed. "Either you or I must leave this house for good. You have offended every duty that a man owes to his sister; you have lost your caste as a gentleman; you should be a pariah!"

Nelson, however, did not seem to mind the denunciation. He only wished to assure himself that he would, for the time, escape trouble.

"You know very well," said he, "that John Perriton and I stand or fall together. Last night I acted hastily. I can see now that it is well that he escapes, and I give you my word that I will do nothing to prevent it."

"That is a falsehood!" Mary replied accusingly. "You have already notified the police that you have seen him alive, and you would be glad to see him suffer the consequences of those things of which you alone are guilty."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I wish that I could convince you," said he, walking toward the window and staring out across the meadows, as if his sister's disbelief had made him very miserable.

Mary, however, without turning her eyes toward him, walked to the center table, upon which her morning mail had been left by the maid. Among the letters there she found one from Jenny—a rapid scrawl, written at midnight, which said:

> John has fled from New York; will be at lodging house 31 West Falmouth Street, Poughkeepsie, at three the day you get this, and there are reasons why you should communicate with him there, after that hour. He is not known there, but will use the name "John Pottle" on his arrival.

Mary could not restrain a little exclamation of surprise, which attracted the attention of her brother, and as she read the note over a second time he left the room. On his return he walked toward the table where she, for a moment, had dropped the envelope containing this message, and before she had turned around he had extracted the note and had put a blank sheet of paper in its place.

"What is this?" said he, holding the envelope up as she turned.

Without answering him, she took the envelope from his hand, and without suspecting that the letter from Jenny had been taken from it, she placed it on the hearth and touched a match to its corner. The little conflagration left only some curled black ashes, and again Nelson Wales, with a shrug of his shoulders, went out onto the porch, where, free from observation, he would be able to read the purloined letter.

On her part, Mary had climbed the broad stairs of Briarwood to her room. The words of Jenny's note were firmly fixed in her mind, and she was ready to go to the address which Jenny had sent her. She reflected, however, that the note had said to communicate with John there, and she feared that she might endanger him by going herself. The one way left to send a message was to telegraph. Pondering what it was meant for her to say to John, she stood in the window of her room, looking out across the sunlit countryside, at the trees which were basking in the summer sunlight, like intelligent creatures, nodding to each other in appreciation of the blueness of the sky and the softness of the air.

She saw, after a time, her brother go toward the stable, and again, after an interval, she saw him drive off toward the station. She was still perplexed over the problem of what Jenny had expected would be the nature of her communication to John. Finally she went downstairs again, into the library, and to her desk. She opened the drawer where, a few days before, she had left a block of telegraph blanks.

They had gone! She rang the bell for her maid.

"Jane," said she.

"Yes, mum."

"Did you take the telegram blanks which were in this drawer?"

"No, mum," replied the simple Jane, "but I seen Mr. Nelson writing on one a few minutes ago."

Mary bit her lip with vexation, staring down at the blotter which covered her desk pad. It had been a clean blotter the day before. Now, however, there was a square of writing upon it. She found herself wondering who had turned a letter page downward against the blotter, for it was her own custom to use a small blotter which she kept behind the inkstand. Then suddenly it dawned upon her that this was her brother's handwriting.

With an exclamation of interest, she took the pad from the desk, and, walking across the library, held it up before the mirror. She had expected difficulty in reading the words which had been blotted upon it, but now from the reflected image the bold, strong hand of her brother stared back with every word as clear as when it had been written upon one of the telegraph blanks which she had missed:

J. R. Forbetson, Chief of Police Inspectors: John Perriton will be at 31 Falmouth Street, Poughkeepsie, after three o'clock. Meet me with your men on Western Flyer to-day, and I will go with you to identify the fugitive. Nelson Wales.

Mary knew that this was the telegram which her brother had been writing. How he had been able to discover the message Jenny had sent her she did not know or care. She only knew that John was now in the most grave danger, and that if any one was to save him, it must be she. She could see her own face staring back into her own eyes, turn white with excitement and fear, as she stood there.

"I must think, I must think," said she to herself.

She knew that the Western Flyer would reach Poughkeepsie before three o'clock. She knew that John was not known at the address given, and before any message could reach him his arrest would take place. She knew that she could not wait to locate Jenny, and there was no one else in the world who could help her. She knew that her brother had already started for the city where he was to meet the officers of the law. She knew now that he feared John more than any one else in the world, and was about to accomplish his purpose in trapping him. Only Mary Wales could save him, by reaching him before the detective, and Mary Wales knew it.

At such times women often have a blind efficiency, and a singleness of purpose which results in greater success than that which would be obtained by men. The one idea now in Mary's mind was to reach the Western Flyer so that she could be in Poughkeepsie as soon as John's pursuers. She had already put on her hat for a stroll in the garden, and now, without weighing any cost, she ran out to the State road and along its border toward the city, as if it were possible for her to use her feet to reach the station in time. Subconsciously she, of course, depended upon some fast vehicle overtaking her, and it could not be otherwise.

The first vehicle, however, which came her way was a touring car of ancient model in which there sat a stout and genial neighbor, who had often discussed with her such weighty matters as those of the best feed for Plymouth Rock chickens in the winter, and the best type of apples to plant in sandy soil.

"You seem to be in a hurry, Miss Wales," said he.

She did not smile, and the genial expression slid off his rotund countenance.

"Anything I can do?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Mary. "Can you make speed?"

"Well, no such speed as your brother used to make in that big new car of his."

"I must get to the city in time to catch the Western Flyer," said Mary.

"Gosh, Hopkins!" exclaimed the other, looking at his watch. "This tin kitchen of mine might do it on a pinch. Step in, Miss Wales, and we will try."

It was a dust-laden old car, with a perspiring and blackened-faced driver, which rolled up out of a side street to the Grand Central Station, as the hour of noon was beginning to strike in some church spire over on Fifth Avenue.

Mary Wales, who had stood up as the car came to a halt, flung open the door of the car and ran toward a train shed. As she approached the track, where the signboard exhibited the words "Western Flyer Express," she saw Nelson with two other men stop to quarrel for a moment with the ticket taker at the gate and run down the concrete platform toward the train at the side of which the officials were already waving a signal to start. Before her face, as she reached the gate, the bars were swung shut, and the gatekeeper, with irritating voice, said: "You were not expecting to take this train, were you, madam? If you were, I am very sorry."

"You must let me through," exclaimed Mary.

"Sorry," replied the man, "but you see the train has already started. You could not have caught it anyway."

An exclamation of despair came from Mary's lips as she turned away, looking about her for the neighbor who had so strained his old machine to bring her to the city.

He was nowhere to be seen, however, and Mary dropped onto one of the benches in the waiting room, defeated and disconsolate. No idea occurred to her for further action, and she stared down with unseeing eyes at an unfolded newspaper which some passenger had left on the seat beside her. There were headlines in large type upon this paper, but only her eyes read them absent-mindedly. From the words her brain got no idea, and only after several minutes, when, to be rid of her misery, she endeavored to find an interest in the reading matter, did she suddenly sit up, with an exclamation.

A word which had attracted her attention in the headlines was "Poughkeepsie." And above it, in still heavier type, were the sentences: "Hackett to Give Try-out to New Water Plane Today. Will Make Long Trip up Hudson this Afternoon."

Jerry Hackett had been a semiprofessional aviator who was adopted by society. Mary had a friend who had often told about his attractive personality, and the marvels of his accomplishments. She had not shared the admiration of this girl friend for young men who owned dare-devil tendencies and devices for speed in the air, but now it seemed to her that Hackett would be a most desirable man to know. Water planes, she reflected, had made a hundred miles an hour with the wind. The newspaper account did not say that he was to make a trip to Poughkeepsie, but, on the contrary, that he had abandoned it for a shorter trip.

"But there is this one chance left," said Mary to herself. "And I will play my courage against his."

During the twelve minutes in which Mary was riding in a taxicab toward the river front, she reflected that the Western Flyer had already left the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street station, and would be on its way out of the city, and when she ran out onto the improvised float upon which the water plane, like some aquatic bird, was sprawled, she forgot all dignity, as she grasped by the coat the man who had been pointed out to her as the aviator.

"Mr. Hackett," said she breathlessly, "I am a friend of Mabel Geraldson.

She has told me about you, and she says that you are not only a gentleman, but a good sport."

The slim little man with the pale-blue eyes was willing to admit this with a nod of pleasure.

"Seventeen minutes ago the Western Flyer Express left the Grand Central Station," Mary went on. "The run to Poughkeepsie by rail is about two hours. Can you beat the train there?"

"But I am not going to Poughkeepsie," said Hackett, with a little smile of amusement. "If I were, I should try to be there some length of time before the express, and if I were not, I should feel that my new plane had been a failure."

"If it is money——" began Mary.

But he only shook his head.

"Or if it is a matter of sport," she went on.

"That would be different," said he. "But I still do not quite understand."

"It is a matter of life or death," Mary said, lowering her voice, because the bystanders were already trying to listen. "It is all of that to me."

"How can it be a matter of life or death to you if I reach Poughkeepsie before the Western Flyer Express?" he inquired.

Mary looked him straight in the eyes.

"It is not you; it is I who must get there," said she.

"You mean that you want to ride with me?"

"Yes."

Hackett turned away from her, looked for a moment at the water plane which his men were putting into the tide of the North River. He looked for a moment at the sky with the practiced eye of his profession. He looked at the long open stretches of the Hudson River to the north.

"A fair wind," said he aloud, "and the Western Flyer makes several stops." Then he turned to Mary and said: "You take all risks?"

She nodded.

"Your name is Miss Mary Wales," said he. "I recognized you, because Miss Geraldson pointed you out to me, about a year ago, at the polo matches. I will be very glad to have you ride with me. You will have an hour or so of a new experience, I think. Is your nerve good?"

"Perfectly," said Mary Wales, with a little smile.

The memory which Mary Wales has of this trip is a confused one, in which there appears the recollection of being confined to a narrow seat, above a set of powerful, pulsing engines, which sometimes coughed and sometimes barked, and sometimes sang a low and musical tune, and sometimes exploded like a set of giant firecrackers in their anger and their eagerness, in their triumph and their sensuous pleasure in speed. In this memory there is a picture of this winged aquatic creature, lolling upon the water, before the great blades of the propeller had begun to turn. It is a memory of the sheen of water turned by the sunlight into leaping molten gold, of great clouds of spray, of a seethe of air and water behind, and the eternal whining of the wind in front. It is a memory of a long, green, undulating streak of shore, rising at times into blue, gray, and brown cliffs, and dropping at times into the thin, fine line of distant marshes. It is a memory of long silences of her companion, and then, long periods when he talked to his device of speed with an angry or cajoling or pleading voice.

She remembers seeing Grant's Tomb in the sunlight. She remembers that the city had faded away. She recalls the appearance of the towering Palisades and of the sleek, ladylike, white-sided steam yachts which they passed on their way up the river. She remembers that at one time, when they lifted clear of the water, Hackett turned toward her, and, with his mouth at her ear, told her that the reason she had

induced him to grant her wishes was that he had for years been carrying on his experiments for sport or exhibition alone, and that the first demand which had ever been made upon him to turn his talents and his speed machinery to actual practical use had been made by her that day. And over all her memories there is blanketed the memory of the pur of machinery, the whine of the air, and the swish of the water beneath.

At times her senses seemed to lapse into a half consciousness, as if the flight had a hypnotic power which dulled them. And it was into one of these lapses that there came the voice of the man whose hands were upon the guiding levers.

"There is the railroad track!" said he. "That level line you see along the shore, which disappears above there in that round black hole in the hills. That's the tunnel. Can you see the smoke coming out of it? Your express has just gone through!"

Mary nodded, shut her teeth together, and folded her arms about her own body.

As they came out into a new straight stretch of river, they saw beyond a line of trees the black streamer of smoke trailed behind by the train which they both hoped they would be able to recognize as the express.

"The wind has gone," growled Hackett, as the plane lifted out of water once more. "We now must win on our own speed."

To Mary it now seemed as if the machine and her own body were a single creature, possessed of the powers of a pagan goddess, able to overcome time and space, and pitting its own strength against that of a device of man. She could see, after the bend of the river had been passed, the wormlike length of train winding shoreward again to skirt the river, at the place where Hackett, taking advantage of the turn, swerved his course closer to the shore.

In the breathless moments, when the train and water plane raced side by side, she tried to see among the faces which stared out the car windows, both in the single passenger coach, and in the several Pullmans, some face which she could identify as that of her brother, but before these faces had appeared to her more than splotches of white, the throbbing engines of the water plane had driven the craft forward until, when they came to a point where the train was to disappear again among thick trees, the water plane was far in advance, and was gathering more speed at every moment.

Again the voice of Hackett was in her ear.

"They have to make another stop," said he, "and far ahead of you, up the river, you can see the smoke of the city."

This time Mary answered him.

"I cannot believe it," she said. "We have not been gone ten minutes."

"We have been gone over an hour," Hackett replied. "I told you that I would give you a new experience, but this I want to say before the remaining minutes are gone. When we arrive there, if the time is precious to you, I will have to land you by means of a rowboat."

"It is all right," said Mary quietly, and turned her head to see if she could see the train coming from behind. The view showed her nothing but a stretch of river dotted with a few small crafts, and the two long rolling banks above which there was an occasional white spot where a farmhouse perched on a hill. When she looked in front again she saw that the city was coming into view out of a haze just as a photograph appears, when developed upon a plate.

The stern of the boat was settling into the water again. Mary remembered the flying fish which she had seen

in the tropics. She recalled the dragging tails which cut through the water, propelling the creatures with such rapidity of muscular motion that no eye could see. The thing beneath her now seemed to be a giant of the species, with its nose pointed at the water front behind which, on the hills, the city crouched.

The experiences through which she had gone for the last twenty-four hours, combined with the sense of having overcome her difficulties, made her nerves suddenly give way, and she only came to a keen realization of her surroundings when she found herself being helped by a stranger up the incline, leading from a float, at which rowboats were riding, to a wharf above. She remembered dimly that she had thanked the owner of the water plane with tears of gratitude in her eyes, and now her only thought was to find the lodging where John would be. In front of her, there suddenly looked up a dilapidated hack with a dilapidated driver seated on the box.

"Do you know where West Falmouth Street is?" she inquired.

The driver removed a dilapidated derby hat, and gazed at its top thoughtfully.

"Yes, ma'am," said he. "Hop right in."

Mary believed that she had never ridden in her life behind so slow an animal as that which toiled up the hill in front of her. Many times she rapped upon the windowpane and begged the driver to hurry the complacent horse. Each time the touch of the whip produced four jumps, and then the animal went back to his stilted trotting.

At last, when Mary had just seen a clock, which showed her that the Western Flyer had arrived in Poughkeepsie, the old vehicle drew up in front of No. 31. Mary ran from the slamming door of the hack, up the steps, and, without ringing, entered. A slatternly woman told her that John Pottle had just come, and was in a room at the head of the stairs.

The odor of cabbage was strong in the hallway, and with her senses suddenly sharpened again by the disagreeable odor, Mary, in her climb up the stairs, reflected upon the many hardships which John in his new life had had to undergo. She knew now that her heart was capable of more love for him than it had ever been before. She knew now the sacrifice that he had made for her, and the patience and good nature with which he had borne the vicissitudes of that sacrifice. At the top of the stairs she knocked on the door.

"John, John," she called. "It is I, Mary. They are coming. There is not a moment to lose!"

The door was opened, and John, seeing who stood before him, put out his arms as if he would infold her.

"No, no!" said she. "Listen! We are too late already. They are on your trail. Listen!"

The doorbell had jangled violently, and in the silence which followed, both Mary and Perriton could hear distinctly the voice of Nelson Wales outside the front door, saying: "Yes, this is the right house—thirty-one."

"The roof is the only way," exclaimed John.

"Yes, yes, the roof," she whispered.

John pressed her hand, and ran up the stairs. She saw him reach the opening above, saw the glare of light that came down as the scuttle was thrown wide, and the darkness that followed its closing again. Then she went into the room which had been his for a few brief moments, and in it she sat down in a rickety old armchair. Suddenly she heard steps upon the stairs, and remembered that all the time she could gain would be favorable to John's escape. She therefore sprang to the door and locked it.

There were loud knocks upon the

panels, and a voice from without said: "Open up, here! Open up!"

Mary sat down again, and said nothing. She heard her brother's voice advising that they break down the door. Outside there were whispers, grunts, and imprecations.

"Do it!" said a gruff voice of authority. "We've got a warrant."

Blows began to rain upon the panels. She could hear a woman shrieking downstairs in fright.

"Here, where is the power of your fist?" said one of the voices. "Let me try that."

A powerful blow was then directed against the wood. It ripped and gave way. The screws in the door latch shrieked with the pressure of a heavy shoulder, and the three men came piling into the room. Mary had picked up a magazine from the table, and, as they entered, she was reading it with a calm smile.

"What is all this disturbance, gentlemen?" she asked. "Am I not allowed to read in peace?"

"Where is this man Pottle?" growled one of the detectives.

"He might have been here, but if he has been, he has gone," Mary replied sweetly.

"Do you know this girl?" asked one of the men, turning to Nelson Wales.

For a moment the brother and sister looked squarely at each other.

"I think I must have made a mistake," said the brother at last. "I do not think that this lady knows anybody by the name of 'John Pottle.' The mistake was mine. Let us go."

And as they went Mary Wales took up her magazine and stared at the open pages with a little smile of triumph.

The ninth story in this series will appear in the first September POPULAR on sale August 7th.

ONE TRUTHFUL FISHERMAN

AN ardent sportsman is St. George Rathborne, author of many books for boys. On one occasion, returning from a fishing trip, a friend asked him:

"Did you catch anything?"

"No!" in a tone of scorn.

"Well," exclaimed the friend, "you are truthful, anyhow, which all fishermen are not."

"As to that," responded St. George, "perhaps you might have called them fish, but I wouldn't. The biggest one I got only weighed twelve pounds."

BY THE INCH

A TALL, lanky farmer walked into a newspaper office and said he wanted an "In Memoriam" notice in the paper. "My old dad died a year ago, and I would like a piece of poetry about him."

"All right," said the clerk. "Have you got it with you?"

"No," said the man. "Can't you fix me up a bit?"

"Sure," replied the clerk. "Our charges are a dollar an inch."

"Good land!" cried the farmer. "I can't afford that! My old dad was six feet high."

A Chat With You

SOMETIMES on other pages, and sometimes, but not so frequently, on this, we print one or two letters out of the great number we receive. Just now we quote from the kind letter of R. Long, of Fredericton, N. B. Among other things he says:

"I take this opportunity to congratulate you on the continued success of THE POPULAR. I wonder if there are many of your readers who can remember when the magazine first started. It contained then about ninety pages. Later on the size was increased to almost two hundred pages. The next step was the increase to two hundred and twenty-four pages. And lastly it is issued twice a month. So you see I can claim to be one of your oldest readers. THE POPULAR has blazed the way in two things if in nothing else. It was the first to publish a complete novel in one issue, and it started 'A Chat With You.' I notice that nearly all of your competitors have adopted both of your ideas. But in the face of everything they cannot touch THE POPULAR, for you surely keep ahead of the times. Wishing you still greater success in the future——"

We believe that Mr. Long is only one of a large number of the original readers of this magazine. It is true that the circulation has doubled and tripled and quadrupled and more than that since that memorable day over ten years ago when the first number appeared on the stands, and it is true also that death and the various vicissitudes of life may have lessened the numbers of the original readers—but still we think that the majority of those who follow the fortunes of THE POPULAR are of a race that lives long and prospers. You can't take a good tonic like this magazine fortnight after fortnight without some good after effects, and we are sure that few indeed have stopped reading the magazine of their own free will.

SO far as blazing trails are concerned, we think that Mr. Long is correct. We started the first really high-class all-fiction magazine, and we were the first to adopt the idea of publishing a book-length novel complete in each issue. Of course, you know that both experiments met with a measure of success greater even than we expected. THE POPULAR is not only the biggest high-class all-fiction magazine in the world, but it has by far the biggest circulation of all the fiction magazines. A great part of the success is due, we think, to the idea; another great part is due to the fact that the fiction in this magazine has been the best published, and still more of the success is due to the fact that we didn't try to do something else in addition to publishing good, stirring fiction.

SOME one, we think it was the author of Ecclesiastes, made the remark that there was a time and place for everything. We are sure it is true. There is a place for photographs of current events—you'll find them in the papers, in the weekly publications, and on the moving-picture screens. There is a place also for special articles on the steel industry, on the modern hotel and steamship. There is also a place for essays on music, art, and the drama. But we have never believed that the place for any of these excellent things was in a magazine that makes its appeal on the

strength of its fiction. In any kind of marketing, a man, if he is at all judicious, does not buy an assortment of articles chosen by some one else. He wants to do his own choosing. You might make up a package consisting of a certain amount of smoking tobacco, a box of talcum powder, a package of bird seed, and a pair of side combs, and succeed in selling a number of the packages to the excited people at a county fair—but to do so would entail a great amount of shouting in regard to the wonderful bargain you were offering, and your appeal would never be to the sensible and careful buyer. Our packages are not made up in such fashion. If you want literary bird seed and artistic talcum powder you must seek between covers other than those of THE POPULAR. We restrict ourselves to fiction. For some reason or other we hate to use the word, but it is perfectly and literally true that we do *specialize* in fiction. We hold that there is a great advantage in singleness of aim, and if there is any reason more than another why the best of the good fiction is found in THE POPULAR it is because we have no other aim than to put it there.

FOR some time we have been planning to introduce a new name to the readers of this magazine. It is that of Joseph C. Lincoln, who wrote "Cap'n Eri," "Cap'n Dan's Daughter," and a number of other books of New England seafaring life that are read widely wherever books are read at all. Not since W. W. Jacobs has there been any one who could paint the shrewd and homely characters of the seacoast with the same humor, the same fidelity, the same quality of interest that inheres in all of Lincoln's work. Lincoln's first POPULAR story, "The Fabric of a Dream," appears in the present issue of the magazine. If you have not already enjoyed it turn to it at once. Don't risk missing it. It is one of a series of three, the other two of which will appear in early numbers of the magazine. After that there will be more work from Mr. Lincoln from time to time.

THE next issue of the magazine, out two weeks from to-day, opens with a book-length novel, complete, by Fred Bechdolt, called "The Red Beach." It is a story of Alaska, and in interest and holding quality is quite on a par with anything Bechdolt has done in the past, and we consider that this is saying a good deal. There is also the first part of a four-part story by Francis Lynde, "The Unscrambling of T-C.R.," and we have no hesitation at all in saying that this is by far the *best* story Lynde has written in years. All his stories are good, but this new one is simply better. It is a railroad story written from the inside. Not only the physical side of the railroad business but the financial and political side are part of this story. How the government tried to reduce a railroad trust to its component parts, how the railroad fought the reducing and unscrambling processes in its own fashion, how the good and bad in financiers fought for and against the happiness and prosperity of a whole countryside—these things are interesting enough as told by Mr. Lynde, but the interest these things will arouse in you is as nothing to the interest which will be yours in the fortunes of young Burdick, and how he bore himself in the mad unscrambling of the T-C.R. Read this and Norton's story in the next number, and you will have more than value for the cost. And in addition to these there are half a dozen other things just as good.

Don't wish you had the Boss's Job.

There is a bigger job waiting for YOU. What you need is the TRAINING that will qualify you for it. YOU have youth and health, energy and ambition. And the world never offered as many chances to the TRAINED man as NOW.

Get alive and learn to do one thing better than someone else. There isn't any magic formula that makes men win. It's **training** that counts. Every boss knows that and he is **anxious** to pay more money to the man who **knows.**

If you really want to **earn** more, **learn** more. Start off by marking that coupon **now.** That costs you nothing and obligates you not at all. It signifies only that you want some information. You want to know how the International Correspondence Schools has raised thousands to better paying positions.

You want to know how it can train **you** in your spare time—regardless of your lack of previous education. You want to know how it can give **you** in a simple, understandable way the knowledge that will qualify you as an expert in your chosen work.

Mark the Coupon

Join the army of well-paid I. C. S. men and women who, at the rate of 400 every month, are voluntarily reporting advancement in salary and position—**won through I. C. S. help. Mark the coupon now.**

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Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X

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Elec. Lighting Supt.	Bookkeeping
Electric Car Running	Stenography & Typewriting
Electric Wireman	Window Trimming
Telephone Expert	Show Card Writing
Architect	Lettering & Sign Painting
Building Contractor	Advertising
Architectural Draftsman	Commercial Illustrating
Structural Engineer	Industrial Designing
Concrete Construction	Commercial Law
Mechan. Engineer	Automobile Running
Mechanical Draftsman	Teacher
Refrigeration Engineer	English Branches
Civil Engineer	Good English for Every One
Surveyor	Agriculture
Mine Superintendent	Poultry Farming
Metal Mining	Plumbing & Steam Fitting
Locomotive Fireman & Eng.	Sheet Metal Worker
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YOU will find the August AINSLEE'S a sure cure for all summer irritations of the disposition caused by humidity, mosquito bites, prickly heat, and plush upholstery.

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COSMO HAMILTON

The concluding section of "John Tremaine," by MARIE VAN VORST; another of the fascinating "Stories of the Super-Women," by ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE, and a great variety of crisp, entertaining short stories by such writers as

JOHN FLEMING WILSON
BONNIE R. GINGER
"ANDRUL"
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To load, open back of camera or adapter, drop in pack and it's done.

To change films for successive exposures, merely pull out successive paper tabs as shown in the illustration.

Films are from the same stock as the famous Eastman N. C., they offer the advantage of tank development, and the Premo Film Pack is the only method which permits the removal of one or more films for development at any time, without waiting until the entire twelve are exposed.

The Premo Film Pack loads in daylight in Premo Film Cameras, or, by means of a Premo Film Pack Adapter, in any plate camera. Fully described in the Premo catalogue, a copy of which may be had at any dealer's, or we will mail it direct on request.

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Plain or Cork Tip. Made of Selected Pure Turkish Tobacco, with a distinctive blend which is appreciated by smokers of discrimination and taste. 100 Bud Cigarettes securely packed in *Red Cedar Wood Boxes, with Brass Hinges and Spring Catch.* Send us $2.00 for above box of 100. Sent postpaid to any address. You'll be glad to smoke 'em. The Bud Cigarette Company, 2 Rector Street, New York City.

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It clarifies, articulates, amplifies and saves your records

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Romances of Modern Business

THE American romance is in the large office-buildings and the marts of trade; it is the romance of great achievements in commerce, in industrial leadership. And it is a wonderful romance! The child of the world's nations is leading them!—ARNOLD BENNETT.

CHAPTER III

The Story of the "57 Varieties"

THE big clock boomed the hour of noon. Where there had been quiet among the diligent workers, there now broke a wave of conversation. The doors were flung open and into the green courtyard passed the hundreds of employees in playful mood.

They made a gladsome picture—these vigorous men and women, with their buoyancy and apparent content with their lot, seeking to make the most of their midday recreation with laughter and healthful exercise. A visitor to the plant with his host turned to take in the view, and then, above, beheld another sight that compelled interest.

At a window, on the second floor of one of the main buildings, stood a man looking upon the scene in the courtyard with a benevolent smile. He was an elderly man, with a face subtly merging the qualities of power and tenderness. Intently he watched the employees at play. "Whose is the 'face at the window'?" was asked.

"That," replied the host, "is Mr. H. J. Heinz, the founder of the company."

During the forenoon, there had been unfolded to the visitor the history of the "House of Heinz"—for that is the scene and subject of this story—and in it the founder of this significant industry stood out an heroic figure. A truly romantic story it was, blending the elements of sentiment and the dramatic action of big achievements. The deft hand of Arnold Bennett could make of it a romance worthy of the name.

The man who stood at the window controls an industry that has a main plant at Pittsburgh occupying one hundred and sixty city lots and fourteen branch factories in different parts of the United States, with others in Canada, England, and Spain. He employs over five thousand hands in his factories alone and distributes his products through his own agencies and branch houses in all the principal nations of the world.

Forty-five years ago this same man began preparing and selling food products, but under very different conditions. A small room in a house at Sharpsburg, Pennsylvania, and an adjoining garden of about half an acre were the setting for the first scene of the industrial spectacle of the "House of Heinz." Here Mr. Heinz began his business career by raising horseradish, and in the single room he put it up for the local trade.

Consider this mighty transition! To the accomplishment of it there must have been brought some force besides the fineness of the products and the integrity of the business management.

Mr. M. S. Achenbach, advertising manager for the H. J. Heinz Company, named the third of the trinity of supports of the Heinz stronghold when he said: "The success of the Heinz Company has been in no uncertain degree made possible by the character and extent of the company's advertising."

It will be remembered that the vital advertising campaign which early established the "57 Varieties" in the public mind was carried on in the periodicals of national circulation.

The little room and plot of garden at Sharpsburg yielded an inspiration; but this small

This is the third of a series of articles that is being published to show how magazine advertising is serving the public.

foundation could not long serve the purposes of a man with the will to build a large structure. Mr. Heinz expanded his operations to fruits and vegetables. Soon he had established such a lucrative local trade that he decided the scope of Sharpsburg was too limited for his enterprise. So, in the early seventies, the Heinz plant was moved to Pittsburgh.

Here again the words of Mr. Achenbach are pertinent: "The local success after the establishment of the plant in Pittsburgh was great," he said; "the Heinz products found a ready market and a continuing demand. But it did not take the young manufacturer long to discover that no matter how superior his product might be, unless he spread the knowledge of that goodness to a wider territory, he should always remain a local manufacturer. So he began to advertise."

The founder of the "House of Heinz" had an ambition to create a world-wide demand for his products. In those early days, before the efficacy of high-powered advertising had been demonstrated, this was regarded as a dream. But the Heinz dream has reached a dramatic fulfilment.

All this was accomplished by a broadly gauged advertising appeal. The foundation was laid through the weekly and monthly periodicals of national circulation. Later, the firm used practically every kind of medium that would make for universality of advertising. The response lifted the Heinz Company from a local Pittsburgh concern to an industry of international proportions.

The Heinz Company believed in the persistency of advertising, and this, with the originality of the company's advertising ideas, has had a telling effect. Who is there not familiar with the small green-pickle trade-mark or the sign of the "57 Varieties"?

The green-pickle trade-mark was adopted soon after Mr. Heinz began advertising in the magazines. Later he saw the psychological appeal of a popular catch-phrase. None that came to his attention seemed just what he wanted until he noticed a sign in a New York shoe-dealer's window. It read: "Twenty styles."

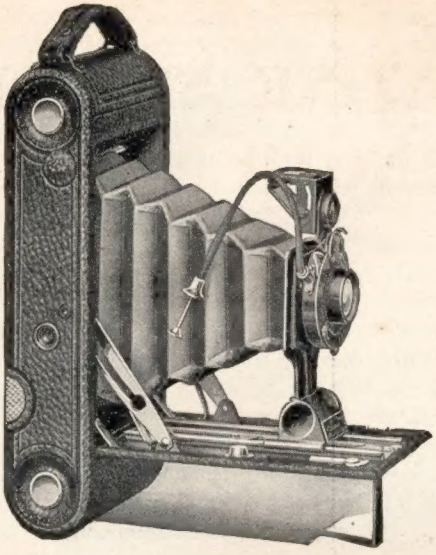
"Why," thought he, "can I not advertise the number of my products?" He drew out a memorandum-book and counted the items in the list of foods manufactured by him. There were fifty-seven. "How can I word this?" he mused, "'styles' will not do for a food term; 'kinds' does not sound right; fifty-seven, fifty-seven—varieties!" The thought came to him in a flash. And so the term, "57 Varieties," was started on its history-making career in the food world.

Mr. Achenbach has some interesting things to say about the Heinz advertising ideals. Hear him further: "The business of the H. J. Heinz Company is an example of the possibilities of modern commercial evolution. It is simply the logical result of fitting an idea to public demand and sticking conscientiously to its purpose of fulfilment.

"Through the national magazines we have commanded a national business. This afterward was supplemented by the results from other media of advertising. The Heinz Company feels that the magazines have been a force in developing a demand for and a confidence in Heinz products. The ethical standards of the magazines with regard to their advertising are in harmony with our own ideals, and have assisted us materially in creating the public confidence that we now enjoy."

A great industrial success such as that of the H. J. Heinz Company is another vivid illustration of the power of the magazines in working hand-in-hand with an industry in its development. A product is advertised in a standard magazine; that message from the manufacturer penetrates every section of the country, carrying with it the accepted suggestion that the product advertised must be "right" or it would not be represented in the magazine. Such is the present-day view of magazine advertising.

There is another phase of the mission of the periodical advertisement of equal importance with its ethical and commercial values. That is its accomplishments in the field of public service. The one instance of the Heinz Company is eloquent of this. The creating of a demand for Heinz products has set new food standards; has given employment to thousands of people; has made a market for the products of some thirty thousand acres of land; has conserved the food supply, and has relieved the housewives of the world of many cares. Many the woman that has blessed Heinz when an unexpected guest arrived!



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Choice of meniscus achromatic or Rapid Rectilinear lens; has new Kodak Ball Bearing shutter with cable release, for time and bulb exposures, and speeds of 1/25, 1/50 and 1/100 of a second; improved back for quick reloading; automatic focusing lock; collapsible reversible finder and two tripod sockets. Uses Kodak Film cartridges of six and twelve exposures, loading and unloading in daylight.

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THE MAGAZINE AND THE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

MUCH is being said these days about a complete novel being included in one issue of a magazine—that the idea is new and noteworthy.

EVERY reader of the POPULAR MAGAZINE knows that such a novel has been given with each issue for the past *ten years!*

IF imitation be the sincerest form of flattery, the POPULAR MAGAZINE ought to be proud of its inspiring lead.

IT is, and shows its pride by still giving the public the finest novels published complete in one issue of a magazine.

FURTHERMORE, its readers are given *two* novels a month, from America's foremost writers: Men like Jack London, Stewart Edward White, Burton E. Stevenson, Ralph D. Paine, Holman Day, Herman Whitaker, Zane Grey, W. B. M. Ferguson, Francis Lynde, Bertrand W. Sinclair, and a host of others.

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WITH this record behind it, the POPULAR makes no idle boast in stating that the record before it will be equally pre-eminent.

REMEMBER that the POPULAR is ten years ahead of the magazine-complete-novel game!

For the Middle of August

Look for this Signature

W. K. Kellogg